

DC Wrap: Steil was the only Wisconsin delegate to vote against a bill to reform the U.S. Postal Service

Posted on Thursday, Feb 10, 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

"It's not like we don't have enough jobs here in Wisconsin. The biggest problem we have in Wisconsin right now is employers not being able to find enough workers."

- U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh, on Oshkosh Defense plans to build the new U.S. Postal Service mail carriers in South Carolina instead of Wisconsin.

"It's my job to support job creation in Wisconsin and I want the trucks built here. To me, it's simple- I want Oshkosh Defense to manufacture trucks in Oshkosh with Wisconsin workers."

- U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, in a [tweet](#).

This week's news

— U.S. Reps. Ron Kind, Tom Tiffany, Mike Gallagher, Glenn Grothman, Mark Pocan, Scott Fitzgerald and Gwen Moore voted in bipartisan fashion to pass the Postal Reform Act this week.

HR 3076 passed 342-92 in a roll call vote on Tuesday. U.S. Rep. Bryan Steil, R-Janesville, was the only member of the Wisconsin congressional delegation to vote against the legislation.

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.

Kind applauded the bill.

“The USPS is a critical part of our nation’s society and economy. As the only organization that provides regular, affordable delivery to every residential and business address, this service is essential to rural communities across our state,” Kind said.

Moore said although the legislation does not address every problem in the postal system, like higher postage rates and slower mail, the bill puts USPS on a better path.

“Rather than cutting or reducing service, slowing the mail, or privatizing the postal service as some have proposed, it is long past due that Congress take up and pass legislation such as the Postal Reform Act to strengthen this vital public good,” Moore said.

[See Kind’s release.](#)

[See Moore’s release.](#)

— GOP Rep. Mike Gallagher said the House should cancel its two-week recess to work on more permanent funding legislation after House Dems passed a measure to continue funding government programs through March 11.

The House in a 272-162 vote passed a continuing resolution to extend federal agency funding into March as the existing CR is set to expire Feb. 18. Wisconsin’s delegation voted along party lines with Dems in favor and Republicans opposed. Gallagher, R-Allouez, in a press release said forgoing a more permanent plan is “crazy.”

“Continuing Resolutions are a disaster, particularly for our military, and if negotiators still can’t reach an agreement five months after their deadline, we need to cancel recess, lock ourselves in a room, and get to work until we’ve come to agreement that, above all else, ensures the Department of Defense has the resources it needs to respond to mounting threats around the world,” he said.

[See the release.](#)

[See the roll call.](#)

— Gallagher also became the first Wisconsin delegation member appointed to the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, of Calif., said he picked Gallagher because of his background as a counterintelligence officer in the Marines and his dedication to his work. Gallagher in a release said he plans to use his experience fighting what he calls a new threat to U.S. values.

“After two decades of prioritizing counterterrorism operations, our challenge is now to adapt the intelligence community to face the threat posed by the Chinese Communist Party, whose core identity is shaped by the role that intelligence operations and United Front Work played in its ascendancy to power within China,” he said.

Former House Majority Leader Paul Ryan also served on the committee as an ex officio member, but he was not appointed.

[See the release.](#)

— U.S. Rep. Scott Fitzgerald introduced a bill meant to ensure U.S. troops honorably discharged for refusing to get vaccinated against COVID-19 remain eligible for G.I. Bill education benefits.

Current law requires troops discharged for refusing a vaccine be given either an honorable discharge or a general discharge under honorable conditions. Those who receive a general discharge under honorable conditions are not eligible for the benefits. Fitzgerald’s legislation would ensure those who receive a general discharge under honorable conditions are eligible.

The Juneau Republican in a press release said those hard working soldiers do not deserve to be punished for refusing vaccines.

“Those who have fought to defend our country should never be deprived of the benefits they so rightly deserve,” he said.. “Unfortunately, President Biden’s vaccine mandate on our Armed Forces threatens to strip education benefits from thousands of servicemembers for refusing to comply with a divisive, and potentially unlawful, vaccine mandate.”

Fitzgerald earlier this year wanted to recommit the Guard and Reserve GI Bill Parity Act in order to amend the legislation to accomplish the same goal as his new bill.

[See the release.](#)

— U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson in a floor speech criticized Dems for instituting low bail policies he says led to the “slaughter” of 6 in the Waukesha Christmas Parade last year.

“It never should have happened,” The Oshkosh Republican said. “This was during the Waukesha Christmas Parade when children were lined up on the street, on the curb waiting to see Santa Claus. Instead, they saw a slaughter.”

He said low bail policies primarily driven by Democratic leaders in historically Democratic areas are leading to the “catch and release” practices he says are causing similar tragedies around the country.

[See Johnson’s floor speech.](#)

— U.S. Reps. Mark Pocan and Gwen Moore praised passage of legislation that effectively ends forced arbitration for sexual assault or sexual harassment claims.

The House in a 335-97 vote passed legislation that voids forced arbitration agreements in any contract if a sexual assault or harassment claim is brought. Wisconsin’s delegation voted along party lines. Moore, D-Milwaukee, in a tweet said the move will affect millions of Americans.

“Forced arbitration clauses hide in the tiny print of paperwork, depriving millions of their rights and protecting the already powerful,” she said.

Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, in a tweet said it also puts power back into survivors’ hands.

“Victims of sexual abuse already face enough hurdles which stop them from sharing their stories; fine print shouldn’t be one of them,” he said.

[See Pocan’s tweet.](#)

[See Moore’s tweet.](#)

[See the roll call.](#)

- Moore and Pocan also praised House colleagues for passing the Global Respect Act to ban foreigners who violate LGBTQ+ rights from entering the United States.

Wisconsin's delegation voted along party lines as the House in a 227-206 vote passed legislation requiring the U.S. State Department to draw up a list of LGBTQ+ rights abusers to submit to Congress. Those on the list would be barred from entering the U.S. with some exceptions for national security or to allow attendance at the United Nations.

Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, in a tweet praised the move.

"Around the world, we've seen a shocking uptick in violence against the LGBTQ+ community," he said. "I proudly voted in support of the #GlobalRespectAct because we must extend our commitment to protecting these individuals beyond our borders."

Championing LGBTQI+ rights should not just be a national effort, Moore said in a tweet.

"Championing LGBTQI+ equality must be a global effort," she said. "I proudly supported the #GlobalRespectAct, which reaffirms that our fight for justice and dignity includes protecting victims of violence and persecution around the world."

[See the Pocan tweet.](#)

[See the Moore tweet.](#)

[See the roll call.](#)

— Moore in the Science, Space, and Technology Committee said she plans to soon introduce a new bill called the Counter-Human Trafficking Research and Development Act.

[See the tweet and video of her comments.](#)

— U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin cosponsored legislation to prohibit members of Congress from using insider information to bolster their stock portfolios while in office.

The “Ban Congressional Stock Trading Act,” introduced by Sen. Jon Ossoff, D-Ga., and Sen. Mark Kelly, D-Ariz., would require members of Congress, their spouses and dependent children to place their investments into a blind trust or divest them within 120 days of taking office or within 120 days of the bill’s passing for current members.

On Wednesday, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said that she expected Democrats to reach a consensus on banning stock trading in Congress soon. According to the Wall Street Journal, Pelosi said she wanted a potential stock trading ban to also apply to the judicial branch. The Journal also reported that Pelosi has passed the torch to the House Administration Committee to figure out stock regulation in Congress.

Baldwin in a statement said that members of Congress should not benefit financially from their insider knowledge.

“I don’t believe members of Congress should be taking the information they have and trading stocks to enrich themselves while making public policy. It’s our job to serve the people, not ourselves,” Baldwin said.

If found in violation, members of Congress would be fined their entire congressional salary. Baldwin put the management of her assets into a blind trust when she joined the senate in 2013.

“This legislation will help ensure that members of Congress are focused on delivering results for the people we work for, and not making decisions that deliver profits to their own bank accounts,” Baldwin said.

— Insider trading has also become a topic of conversation among candidates vying for Sen. Ron Johnson’s congressional seat as Outagamie County Exec Tom Nelson has called for a ban on stock trading in Congress.

“They’re taking advantage of insider information to enrich themselves. We ought to pass a law that bans stock trading for members of Congress and their families,” the Dem said in a campaign ad.

Nelson has dubbed the ban the “Packers Rule.”

“The Packers, they aren’t owned by the millionaires and the billionaires, they’re owned by people like you and I,” Nelson said.

Dem candidate Alex Lasry, on leave from his post as the Milwaukee Bucks' Senior Vice President, has called for members of Congress and every Senate-confirmed appointee to either divest or put assets into a blind trust. While he supports Ossoff and Kelly's proposed legislation, he said in a statement that it doesn't go far enough and leaves "glaring loopholes."

"For example, many mutual funds focus on specific sectors and subsectors of the economy that move the same way as individual stocks and that would effectively defeat the individual stock trading ban," Lasry said.

[See Baldwin's press release.](#)

— U.S. Reps. Glenn Grothman and Bryan Steil both spoke on the House floor this week to urge action to stop the flow of fentanyl across the southern border.

Steil, R-Janesville, asked House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to bring the Halt All Lethal Trafficking of Fentanyl Act to the House floor for a vote on Monday.

On Feb. 18, fentanyl-related substances or "analogues" will lose their Schedule I classification under the Controlled Substances Act. The classification, which designates drugs that have a high potential for abuse, do not have an accepted medical use, and lack accepted safety for use under medical supervision, was extended last May. The HALT Act would amend the Controlled Substances Act to make that classification permanent.

"If fentanyl analogues are not extended or made permanent soon, law enforcement officers will have a hand tied behind their back from stopping fentanyl from killing Americans. Yet Speaker Pelosi continues to refuse to bring the HALT Act, critical legislation, to this floor to make scheduling permanent," Steil said.

Steil cosponsors the bill introduced by Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-La. Steil said that more needs to be done to stop the flow of fentanyl into the country.

"I've been to the southern border, and I've spoken firsthand with the men and women of Border Protection about the increased drugs coming across our southern border. We must secure our border," Steil said.

Grothman spoke on the House floor Wednesday to decry the Biden administration for not increasing funds allocated to Customs and Border Protection in the budget

this coming year. The Glenbeulah Republican said he has heard about fentanyl moving into the U.S. on visits to the border.

“Every time I’m down there, the border patrol again and again emphasizes that with this open flow of people coming in this country, you’re getting unlimited fentanyl,” Grothman said.

Grothman also touted legislation he introduced in late October. The Fentanyl Penalties Parity Act would amend the Controlled Substances Act and reduce the threshold for mandatory minimum penalties for fentanyl-related offenses. Grothman’s fellow GOP U.S. Reps. Scott Fitzgerald, of Juneau, and Tom Tiffany, of Minocqua, cosponsored the legislation, which has not been brought to the floor for a vote.

“When it comes down to the penalties for people who are selling this fentanyl or trafficking in fentanyl, they are not great enough,” Grothman said.

— U.S. Rep. Tom Tiffany joined a letter calling for the Committee on House Administration to investigate reports that Capitol police have started searching for background information on people that meet with lawmakers.

The letter, led by Rep. Andy Biggs, R-Ariz., was spurred by a Politico article reporting that Capitol police started looking into the social media feeds of people that meet with lawmakers, including looking for information that could cast them in a negative light, after the Jan. 6 attacks on the Capitol.

According to Politico, this expands on a preexisting practice of creating “Congressional Event Assessments,” which intelligence would then use to evaluate risks to safety at events.

In the letter, lawmakers say the reporting “raises serious constitutional concerns,” and said that the allegations, if true, are “serious violations of Americans’ civil rights and civil liberties.”

Politico also reported that Capitol Police had started to look at tax and real estate records to see who owns properties lawmakers visit.

“The recent reports of Capitol Police digging into the business of members of Congress, staff and constituents is disturbing and raises many concerns,” Tiffany

wrote in a tweet on Tuesday.

[See the letter.](#)

Posts of the week

<https://twitter.com/SenatorBaldwin/status/149148494977731588>

<https://twitter.com/RepBryanSteil/status/1491430294192537600>

<https://twitter.com/RepTiffany/status/1489295258001317890>

<https://twitter.com/RepGrothman/status/1491503346812866564>

<https://twitter.com/RepRonKind/status/1491132969272037376>

ICYMI

[‘It’s not like we don’t have enough jobs here in Wisconsin’: Ron Johnson won’t try to land Oshkosh Corp. postal vehicle work](#)

[U.S. Rep. Tiffany: Use Canadian anti-mandate truckers to address Mexican border crossings](#)

[Ron Kind: Westby Cooperative Creamery receives USDA rural development funding](#)