

DC Wrap: Baldwin calls on Menendez to resign; House works to fund the government, but former Speaker Ryan says it's likely too late

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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

It's clear who has the power. MAGA Republicans are controlling the party, dictating their extreme hostage demands, and bringing us closer to a government shutdown.
– U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore, D-Milwaukee, in a [tweet](#) amid House Republican infighting over federal funding legislation ahead of a looming Saturday deadline.

If you want to save Medicare and Social Security, quit spending trillions of dollars on green energy boondoggles, and get the debt and deficit under control.

– U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh, in a [tweet](#) criticizing government spending to combat climate change.

This week's news

— U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, is calling on U.S. Sen. Bob Menendez, D-N.J., to resign following his indictment on bribery charges.

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During comments in his hometown this week, Menendez rejected calls to step

down, saying the \$480,000 in cash found in his closet was for “emergencies” and had been withdrawn from his personal accounts. He didn’t address the gold bars also found in his home and other details in the indictment, as well as whether he will run again in 2024.

Baldwin, who’s up for reelection next year, said while Menendez will “have his day in court to defend himself,” she believes it’s in the best interest of his constituents, the American people and national security for him to resign.

“The indictment spells out deeply troubling allegations against Senator Menendez that breach the American people’s trust and compromise his ability to effectively represent his constituents,” Baldwin said.

Baldwin joins several of her Dem colleagues in calling on Menendez to resign: John Brown, of Ohio; John Fetterman, of Pennsylvania; and Peter Welch, of Vermont.

U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan’s spokesperson Matt Handverger told WisPolitics it’s not up to the House member if a senator should resign.

“However, he feels that if you have to google ‘how much is a kilo of gold worth’ after receiving a few gold bars, you probably don’t deserve to be an elected official,” he said.

[See her full statement.](#)

— The House this week approved amendments to the agriculture appropriations bill from U.S. Reps. Tom Tiffany, R-Minocqua, and Derrick Van Orden, R-Prairie du Chien.

Van Orden’s amendment would add \$10 million to U.S. Department of Agriculture Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives to help farmers with the development, production, marketing and distribution of dairy products.

“This amendment will help ease the burden of Bidenflation for our farmers and ensure that they’re able to continue the innovations in today’s uncertain economic times,” Van Orden said.

Tiffany’s amendment would block the Biden administration from prohibiting chocolate milk in schools after USDA proposed banning flavored milk in elementary and middle schools.

“When you have a federal government that believes that they need to regulate the milk that is served in our kids’ schools across America, you have a federal government that is out of control,” Tiffany said.

House Appropriations Committee member Mark Pocan said he’s “in disbelief” about the ag bill’s funding reduction to 2001 levels.

“I don’t see how any member of Congress who represents rural America can show this much disrespect to their constituents,” he said. “Certainly no one from Wisconsin.”

The town of Vermont Dem ripped the proposal for gutting loan programs, disaster relief funds, conservation efforts, energy assistance programs and others many farmers rely on.

“With this level of cuts, I would assume this was a satire, a ‘Saturday Night Live’ episode,” he said. “But it’s just another Tuesday night in the U.S. Congress where farmers apparently aren’t valued by the House Republican majority.”

— U.S. Rep. Derrick Van Orden signed on in support of a bill to make sure military and certain defense employees are still paid if a shutdown happens.

The Pay Our Troops Act covers all armed forces members, including reserve components that perform active service and would make any money in the treasury not otherwise appropriated available to pay their salaries. The Prairie du Chien Republican in a statement said he won’t allow DC’s “dysfunction” to undermine national security and hurt military families.

“As a retired U.S. Navy SEAL, I relied on food assistance to feed my children while I was deployed in combat zones,” he said. Many military men and women are already struggling to make ends meet, and taking away their paychecks as they put their lives on the line to defend America is unacceptable.”

[See the statement.](#)

— U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan joined a Milwaukee United Auto Workers picket line in support of the national strike against America’s big three automakers.

The Town of Vermont Dem in Milwaukee's Bayview neighborhood held a picket sign alongside other UAW Local 75 workers outside a MOPAR plant, a parts distribution location for Stellantis, the parent company to Chrysler. Workers are demanding better pay as automakers raked in record profits this year. Pocan said the workers made concessions when manufacturers needed help during the pandemic, and now it's time for the companies to support their workers.

"While executives continue to give themselves raises, many hard-working employees who keep these plants running have struggled to make ends meet," he said. "Autoworkers keep our economy running and our country moving."

President Joe Biden also this week became the first sitting president to visit a picket line after he joined Michigan autoworkers in support of their bargaining efforts.

[See the release.](#)

— Former Speaker Paul Ryan said House Republicans' failure to approve bills to keep the federal government open makes them look like "fools" who "can't govern."

He also predicted Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., will face a motion to take away his gavel.

The Janesville native at a UW-Madison La Follette School of Public Affairs event said the California Republican "has it worse than I did."

Ryan, who oversaw Congress during the last shutdown in 2018, said McCarthy's deal with Dem President Joe Biden to avert a June debt limit crisis in exchange for keeping spending levels nearly flat for the next fiscal year was good.

But he blasted far-right Freedom Caucus members for blowing it up and causing the House to lose its appropriations power in the budget-making process.

"They look like fools," he said. "We look like we can't govern. But I think at the end of the day he will bring a bill that honors their agreement, that funds appropriations."

But McCarthy also faces a very real threat from Freedom Caucus member U.S. Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla.

“And so I think Kevin will have to endure a motion-to-vacate vote,” Ryan said.

He added he hopes for bipartisan support “for the sake of the institution.”

“I think, institutionally, if the Democrats say ‘let’s just participate in kicking a guy out for bringing a bipartisan compromise to the floor,’ it doesn’t speak very well for the institution,” he said.

— Ryan also argued Republicans will lose in 2024 if they put Donald Trump on their ticket.

Ryan, who led the House for the first half of Trump’s term, argued suburbanites in battleground states such as Wisconsin, referencing the WOW counties specifically, already showed they won’t vote for Trump.

The party will need to focus on convincing diehard Trump voters the one-term president will surely take another loss in a matchup against Biden.

“I’d say if I had to bet, it would be Biden, because if it was Biden – Trump, I think Biden wins,” he said.

He added he’s optimistic they could win with former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley, U.S. Sen. Tim Scott, R-S.C., former Vice President Mike Pence, or Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis right now, but “maybe not that Vivek guy,” he added.

GOP presidential candidates debated for a second time last night in the lead-up to next summer’s nominating convention in Milwaukee.

“But if we put forward a fresh face, we’re going to win,” he said.

— The liberal Opportunity Wisconsin has launched a new ad campaign targeting Van Orden over a possible shutdown of the federal government.

The group had previously announced a seven-figure buy earlier this year targeting Van Orden and U.S. Rep. Bryan Steil, R-Janesville. It said the latest ad is part of that and will run on digital. The group added the buy behind the latest spot will depend on what happens with negotiations over keeping the federal government open.

The narrator in the ad says Van Orden is “selling us out, while special interests cash in.” The narrator says he voted for tax breaks for corporations and is now willing to

“stand with his caucus” to shut down the government and push through a plan that would threaten access to Social Security and Medicaid.

“Derrick Van Orden should put Wisconsin first,” the narrator says to close the spot. “Tell Congressman Van Orden: Don’t shut us down.”

[See the ad.](#)

— House Armed Services Committee member Mike Gallagher called the state of military barracks a “total disgrace” while stressing the importance of passing a defense appropriations bill.

The Allouez Republican after reviewing a Government Accountability Office report detailing conditions at U.S. military barracks said Americans who serve rightly expect basic and safe living standards. But the report found various health and safety related issues facing service members on base.

“While the Department of Defense takes pride in the well-maintained golf courses and new EV charging stations at its installations, it has turned a blind eye to the living conditions endured by service members, which can include collapsing ceilings, mold and mildew, and even squatters raiding servicemembers’ personal possessions,” Gallagher said.

Gallagher also said the report warrants further investigation.

“Congress must implement more rigorous oversight into the Pentagon’s prioritizations and work to pass a defense appropriations bill that gives sufficient funding to improve servicemembers’ quality of life,” he said.

The statement and report come as Congress works to pass at least some kind of measure to keep the government funded as the Saturday deadline to fund the government looms.

House Republicans on Tuesday moved forward with a bill to fund the Department of Defense, but the measure includes significant cuts that will likely deter the Senate, which has been focused on keeping spending at the level McCarthy agreed to earlier in the year.

[See the statement.](#)

— Gallagher, a former Marine captain, also applauded the launch of the design phase of the Global War on Terrorism Memorial.

The foundation in charge of the memorial this week launched a 22-day “Help Design History” campaign to get input from any American who wants to propose an idea on how to design the memorial. The former Marine intelligence officer who was deployed to Iraq for at least part of his 2006-13 tenure in a statement said he hopes any American impacted by the war provides input.

“Congress authorized the Global War on Terrorism Memorial to be built on the National Mall so that the generations of veterans who served in this conflict could be honored just like the veterans of major wars before them,” he said. “As we move forward with constructing the memorial, it’s now time to decide how their story is told.”

Gallagher in his first term proposed creating the memorial, but more legislation was necessary to make sure it could be constructed on the National Mall.

[See the statement.](#)

— U.S. Rep. Glenn Grothman, R-Glenbeulah, is leading bipartisan legislation with all Wisconsin House members to name a post office after a police officer killed in the line of duty.

Trevor Casper was shot and killed in Fond du Lac in 2015 while attempting to apprehend a bank robbery and murder suspect on his first solo assignment. Casper, who died at 21 years old, was the youngest police officer killed on the job in state history.

Under the measure, the U.S. Post Office on Fremont Street in Kiel would be named the “Trooper Trevor J. Casper Post Office Building.”

Posts of the week

Today, Rep. Gallagher attended the Avergent LLC Office Expansion Ribbon Cutting in Green Bay. During his remarks, Rep. Gallagher congratulated Drew and the entire Avergent team for the success they have had in helping employers improve healthcare benefits for their employees.

pic.twitter.com/5FZD54KW0z

— Rep. Gallagher Press Office (@RepGallagher) [September 26, 2023](#)

I'm wishing a blessed Yom Kippur to those observing this holiday in WI-04 and around the world.⁰

G'mar Chatimah Tova. pic.twitter.com/VkBliFMspn

— Rep. Gwen Moore (@RepGwenMoore) [September 24, 2023](#)

It was a privilege participating in the groundbreaking for [@MoraineParkTech](#)'s new Fire Training Center. Once built, the Horicon Regional Center will strengthen [#WI06](#) by training more firefighters and paramedics to meet increased demand in our area.

pic.twitter.com/amvndCqI7Y

— Rep. Glenn Grothman (@RepGrothman) [September 25, 2023](#)

Today, we celebrate and recognize the voices and experiences of the bisexual community. I see you, I hear you, and I'm proud to stand with you. [#BiVisibilityDay](#) pic.twitter.com/ljqENOWrRv

— Sen. Tammy Baldwin (@SenatorBaldwin) [September 23, 2023](#)

ICYMI

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: Adam Kinzinger accuses Mike Gallagher of backing off Trump impeachment out of re-election concerns](#)

[The Hill: These 19 Senate Republicans voted against advancing short-term funding bill](#)

[WPR: US soldier who crossed into North Korea 2 months ago is in American custody, US officials say](#)

[Channel 3000: For the Record: Pocan on government shutdown, Van Orden page incident](#)

[WLUK: Connect to Congress: Rep. Gallagher on GOP debate, UAW strike, impending government shutdown](#)