

# DC Wrap: Cooke official launches another 3rd CD bid as others consider, Johnson defends Saudi investment in PGA Tour

Posted on Thursday, Jul 13, 2023

*REMINDER: mark WP posting as “featured” and “DC Wrap,” set featured image to include DC Wrap image, set WP excerpt to include first paragraph or two of top story.*

*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**

“I support the plan going before the Milwaukee Common Council to establish a 2% sales tax to ensure there is enough revenue to provide basic services in the years ahead. With this tax in place, commuters & visitors to the city will directly support the services they receive.”

*-U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore, D-Milwaukee, on the 12-3 council vote to approve the tax increase.*

“Why did SEC Chairman Gary Gensler gut key proxy advisor safeguards? This bad action is just one of the many ways the Biden SEC is trying to politicize retirement investing. I’m fighting to keep politics out of your retirement funds.”

*-U.S. Rep. Bryan Steil, R-Janesville, arguing against Gensler’s decision to reverse rules aiming to ensure proxy advisors don’t give bad advice.*

**>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

## ***This week's news***

**— Former small business owner Rebecca Cooke, who finished second in the Dem primary for the 3rd CD last year, is taking another shot at the western Wisconsin seat — and she may have some company.**

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee is targeting both the 1st and 3rd CD as districts to flip in the 2024 election cycle. U.S. Rep. Bryan Steil has yet to see any opponents in the 1st CD.

But Cooke is the first Dem to formally announce plans to run against freshman U.S. Rep. Derrick Van Orden, R-Prairie du Chien. In her announcement, Cooke called Van Orden part of the problem with a “Washington that isn’t working for us.”

“Families are struggling to get by and deserve a champion who knows what it’s like to make ends meet and actually shows up for neighbors in need,” Cooke said. “I’m running for Congress to better serve communities across Wisconsin, provide more opportunities for success, and be a relentless fighter for our way of life.”

Cooke took 31.1 percent of the vote in a four-way Dem primary last fall in the race for the then-open seat formerly held by longtime Dem Cong. Ron Kind of La Crosse. State Sen. Brad Pfaff, who won the nomination with 39 percent of the vote, has been considering a run, though he’d have to give up his seat in the Legislature for another bid.

Retired CIA officer Deb McGrath, who took third in the 2022 Dem primary with 19.1 percent, told WisPolitics she is “strongly considering” a run. Dem sources indicate Wisconsin Economic Development Corp. CEO and Secretary Missy Hughes, of Viroqua, also has been exploring a bid.

Meanwhile, Steil announced this week his campaign pulled in more than \$900,000 during the second quarter, including \$827,000 through his personal campaign account.

Steil won reelection to the southeastern Wisconsin 1st CD with 54 percent of the vote against Janesville attorney Ann Roe, who didn’t receive significant financial support from national Dems.

Steil, R-Janesville, will report more than \$2.85 million cash on hand in his personal

campaign account when he files with the FEC by Saturday's deadline.

By comparison, Steil had \$920,777 in his personal campaign account at the same point two years ago ahead of winning a third term.

Steil's campaign announced fundraising totals ahead of Saturday's filing deadline through his campaign account, victory fund and leadership fund.

The fundraising numbers include: \$827,000 for his personal campaign account; \$121,000 through the Steil Victory Fund; and almost \$60,000 through his leadership fund.

Steil is able to transfer funds from his victory fund to his personal campaign account. The leadership fund is used to help other candidates.

[See Cooke's announcement.](#)

[See Steil's release.](#)

**— U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson defended Professional Golfers' Association of America's move to partner with the Saudi government's LIV Golf, arguing the Saudi funding created an existential threat to the PGA.**

The Oshkosh Republican in a Senate Homeland Security Committee Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations hearing provided some contrast to those who argued the deal would give a government known for human rights violations more room on the world stage. Johnson argued Saudi's public investment fund is estimated to be worth hundreds of times the PGA's net roughly \$250 million in assets.

"LIV is financed by an entity who is committed to competing for top players with little if any regard or expectation of a direct financial return," he said. "From commercial standpoint, that's not a fair fight. And the PGA Tour accurately viewed that lives as an existential threat."

Johnson argued past golf tours competing with the PGA were fine because they "competed in a commercial marketplace dictated by the normal market force of profit and loss."

PGA Tour COO Ron Price in the hearing said the Saudi investment would be "north

of \$1 billion.”

Many in the hearing accused the Saudi government of attempting to clear its reputation of human rights violations.

Johnson agreed “sportswashing” is a legitimate issue, “but no amount of money can wash away the stain of the brutal Khashoggi assassination and other humans rights abuses.”

“But it would be grossly unfair to expect the PGA Tour to bear the full burden of holding Saudi Arabia accountable,” he said. “After all, anyone who drives a car or uses oil-based products has helped fill the coffers of the Saudi public investment fund.”

He also argued there’s no actual deal for Congress to review yet, only a framework.

[Watch the hearing.](#)

**— U.S. Rep. Bryan Steil this week introduced legislation to overhaul the elections process, calling it the “most substantive and conservative” election bill to come before the House in a generation.**

The Janesville Republican made the announcement with GOP colleagues in Atlanta, where the House Administration Committee he chairs held a field hearing the same day.

The American Confidence in Elections Act includes a variety of provisions Steil argued would improve voters’ confidence in the election process.

Some provisions in the bill would restrict federal funds from going to places that allow people who aren’t U.S. citizens to vote, prohibit nonprofits from giving money to election boards and give states access to the Social Security death database.

“When’s a good time to remove someone from the voter rolls? When they die,” Steil said in a press conference.

Steil highlighted a sweeping Georgia election law that included new voter ID requirements and limited the use of ballot drop boxes in the Peach State. He blasted Dems for criticizing the measure, which President Joe Biden previously labeled “Jim Crow in the 21st century.”

He said politicians on the left would likely also attack the election bill announced this week.

“It’s one of the reasons I think it’s important that we’re here in Georgia,” he said. “Because we saw the left’s false attacks against voter integrity legislation previously. I have no doubt that the left is going to attempt to attack, to mislead, to disguise the work that we’re doing.”

End Citizens United // Let America Vote spokesperson Jonas Edward Jenks in a statement in blasted the legislation, arguing it would only benefit the wealthy and corporate interests.

“MAGA Republicans trying to regain confidence in elections is like an arsonist trying to put out the fire they started,” Jenks said.

[See Steil’s release.](#)

**— House Defense Spending Reduction Caucus Co-founder Mark Pocan blasted President Joe Biden’s decision to give cluster bombs to Ukraine after the White House criticized Russia’s use last year.**

“When Russia first deployed cluster munitions in February 2022, the US said that it could potentially be a war crime,” the Madison Dem tweeted. “What’s changed? Nothing. There is no need for cluster bombs. It’s a bad call to be giving any to other countries.”

More than 100 nations have signed a UN treaty to ban use of the bomblet-releasing bombs as many of the bomblets fail to detonate on impact, leaving unexploded ordinance that could kill or maim civilians years after conflicts wane.

Many have also compared the toll on civilians to the use of landmines. Cluster bombs also cover a wide area when dropped, a feature opponents argue causes indiscriminate death and destruction.

[See Pocan’s tweet.](#)

[See the joint press release.](#)

**— U.S. Rep. Tom Tiffany during a hearing this week needled FBI Director Christopher Wray over a briefing U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson received in 2020**

**warning him he could be a target of Russian disinformation.**

Johnson, R-Oshkosh, has called the briefing “corrupt,” arguing it was leaked to the press to “smear me.” The FBI at the time had concerns about Russian influence on the 2020 presidential election.

Tiffany referenced Johnson’s previous remarks saying the briefing was a setup, suggesting the briefing could have hurt the senator’s reelection bid.

“And that goes back to the point about interfering in elections,” the Minocqua Republican said. “Senator Johnson was one of the most vulnerable Republican incumbents — if not the most vulnerable Republican incumbent — that was a target of the Democrats in the 2022 election.”

Tiffany said Johnson knew there was “someone or some people within the FBI and the intelligence arena that were going after him.”

**— U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin this week introduced legislation seeking to address a lack of access to hospice and palliative care.**

The bill would invest in workforce training efforts, educate patients, families and health care workers about the benefits of palliative care, and direct the Department of Health and Human Services to expand research on palliative care.

“Having served as my grandmother’s primary caregiver, I know the difference quality palliative and hospice care can make for a loved one who is battling a serious illness,” the Madison Dem said.

Baldwin said the legislation would ensure health care professionals have the tools they need to keep patients with serious or life-threatening illnesses safe.

[See the release.](#)

**— U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher re-introduced a constitutional amendment aimed at blocking future Supreme Court expansion.**

The move comes as President Joe Biden faces mounting pressure to back expansion as the conservative majority high court takes criticism for a series of rulings that have overturned Dem-favored policies such as federal abortion protections and affirmative action. Gallagher, R-Allouez, in a statement said radical progressives

want to delegitimize the court by packing it with liberals.

“This is a recipe for chaos, an idea so crazy that President Biden’s own Supreme Court commission dismissed it,”

The last time the Supreme Court grew to its current nine justices was in 1869. The number at the time reflected the number of federal circuit courts in America.

House Dems in May introduced a bill to bump the court to 13 justices, the current number of federal circuit courts in the nation.

[See Pocan’s tweet.](#)

**— House Dems and Republicans are still working on the nation’s military budget this week with hopes to wrap things up soon.**

U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Madison, has long criticized the Pentagon for repeatedly failing audits, something Pocan argues proves the military is not holding itself accountable for the taxpayer dollars it requires to exist. Last year’s National Defense Authorization Act was worth \$816.7 billion. This year will likely get even closer to 13 digits.

“Spending nearly \$1 trillion on the Pentagon to enrich greedy defense contractors is outrageous,” Pocan tweeted.

House Armed Services Committee member Mike Gallagher in a floor speech argued in favor of the measure.

“I urge my colleagues to support this critical piece of legislation,” the Allouez Republicans said. “I believe it promotes the cause of peace. I believe it promotes the cause of defending American sovereignty.”

Amendment proposals from Wisconsin U.S. Reps. include:

- \*Tom Tiffany, R-Minocqua, wanting to ban government maps depicting Taiwan as part of the People’s Republic of China;
- \*Bryan Steil, R-Janesville, wanting to require the secretary of defense and secretary of state to brief Congress on what weapons the U.S. and its allies have committed to sending to Ukraine;
- \*Van Orden, R-Prairie du Chien, wanting to designate Nov. 12, 2023 as National Warrior Call Day and recognize the importance of connecting military members with

support structures to transition into civilian life;

\*Grothman, R-Glenbeulah, wanting to bar military service academies from considering applicants' race during admissions; and

\*Moore, D-Milwaukee, wanting the Secretary of Defense to report on current or planned military health care efforts to treat perinatal mental health needs for military members.

[See other amendment proposals.](#)

[See Pocan's tweet.](#)

### ***Posts of the week***

It was a pleasure meeting with [#WI](#) special education teachers. As a member of [@edworkforcecmte](#), I'm grateful for the work they're doing to enhance special education in [#WI06](#). [pic.twitter.com/3AgVOQNpk0](https://pic.twitter.com/3AgVOQNpk0)

— Rep. Glenn Grothman (@RepGrothman) [July 12, 2023](#)

It was great to meet with the 30th Street Industrial Corridor's Equitable Development Planning Team to discuss the transformation of the corridor and expansion of economic opportunities. [pic.twitter.com/L7srMpeCVp](https://pic.twitter.com/L7srMpeCVp)

— Rep. Gwen Moore (@RepGwenMoore) [July 11, 2023](#)

Happy [#CowAppreciationDay](#)!

Wisconsin is home to over 1.2 million dairy cows. Thank you, dairy farmers, for all you do to feed our state and nation. Milk today for all it's worth! ☐ [pic.twitter.com/791DDbwne2](https://pic.twitter.com/791DDbwne2)

— Rep. Derrick Van Orden Press Office (@RepVanOrden) [July 11, 2023](#)

Pretty good explanation of the appropriations season. Or at least how it should work...[#MagicMondays pic.twitter.com/D3WfkdkSMW](#)

— Rep. Mark Pocan (@RepMarkPocan) [July 10, 2023](#)

## ***ICYMI***

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: Rep. Mike Gallagher criticizes 'Barbie' movie for its cartoon map of China and the South China Sea](#)

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: Ron DeSantis commits to participating in the Milwaukee GOP presidential debate](#)

[AP News: Deep partisanship will be on display as Congress releases competing voting bills](#)

[Politico: Abortion, LGBTQ and race: McCarthy confronts far-right demands on Pentagon policy bill](#)