

DC Wrap: Gallagher says defense cuts off the table for debt ceiling negotiations, pushes for prioritizing defense increases

Posted on Thursday, May 11, 2023

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

Three facts: The leader of the Republican Party has been found guilty of sexual assault. Women should be believed. And no one is above the law.

- U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, in a [tweet](#) after a jury found former President Donald Trump sexually abused columnist E. Jean Carroll on Tuesday.

As many as 700,000 illegal immigrants are expected to cross the southern border illegally in the next few days. That's enough to fill Lambeau Field 8 TIMES. Why does Joe Biden refuse to stop this invasion?

- U.S. Rep. Tom Tiffany, R-Minocqua, in a [tweet](#) ahead of today's expected expiration of Title 42, a COVID-19-era emergency order the federal government has used to deny many people from crossing the border.

This week's news

— U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher says defense cuts are off the table to satisfy future spending cut requirements in a Republican debt limit bill, but there is room for more efficiency.

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The Allouez Republican House Armed Services Committee member in a phone interview with WisPolitics said he doubts any real defense budget cuts would pass the Republican-controlled House. The Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party chair added there are ways to ramp up defense spending while prioritizing where the funds go to increase deterrents against China. That could appease both defense hawks and those looking for defense cuts, he said.

“But at the most basic level, it doesn’t make sense just to increase defense spending across the board unless you fix some of the broken bureaucracy,” he said.

The former Marine intelligence officer added China is the biggest threat to America right now. Prioritizing where defense spending goes is also important, and should to account for China’s geography, he added.

Gallagher’s committee recently held a war game called a tabletop exercise to help members understand what might happen if China and the U.S. go to war. He said looking at the TTX map, “one thing becomes very apparent: there’s a lot of water on that map.”

“So what you need to counter China over the long term is not a bigger army, but rather a bigger Navy, and Air Force armed to the teeth with long range, precision fires, giving just the tyranny of distance needed in the Pacific.”

Cutting the size of the Department of Defense’s civilian workforce would also improve defense effectiveness, he added.

He also said that money should come with a multi-year appropriation “to give certainty to the defense industrial base, in order to refill and pre-position our stockpiles west of the International Dateline before the shooting starts.”

— Gallagher also signaled there may be some legislation coming after a hearing on the Uyghur Muslim genocide in China.

The legislation would close a loophole that allows companies to exploit child labor.

Import products valued under \$800 are not as heavily scrutinized by customs officials, creating what many call the de minimis loophole. Gallagher and Select Committee Co-chair U.S. Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi, D-Ill., last week sent a letter to several U.S. companies demanding they say if their products are made using child

labor. Gallagher this week said the decision not to scrutinize products under \$800 was meant to reduce the burden on customs officials.

“But we have reason to believe that certain companies are exploiting the loophole to get under the terms of the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act,” he said.

He added another idea is to consider controls on American capital invested in China “so that we’re not unwittingly subsidizing genocide or helping the Chinese build things; surveillance technology, biometric technology; that are used to perpetuate the ongoing genocide.”

— He also called the Biden administration childish for saying Republicans’ plan to tie future spending cuts to a debt limit increase would mean benefit cuts for veterans.

“I think what this shows is just how desperate the Biden administration is,” he said. “Their position is not tenable. It’s actually childish.”

House Speaker Kevin McCarthy last month proposed a \$1.5 trillion debt hike bill that would require about \$4.8 trillion in future spending cuts.

He also said Biden has refused to negotiate with the House for too long, which he added has wasted months and shown Biden is not the leader America needs.

“That’s not leadership that’s demanded at this particular moment in history,” he said.

Biden has met this week with Republican leaders to negotiate a debt limit increase.

— U.S. Rep. Bryan Steil this week introduced a bill to address the effects of social media on youth, coinciding with Mental Health Awareness Month.

The Protecting Young Minds Online Act would require the Center for Mental Health Services to create a strategy to address the effects of new technologies, such as social media, on children’s mental health.

Approximately 900,000 youth between 12 and 17 years old attempted suicide in 2021, according to the CDC’s Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

The Janesville Republican in a statement said social media use leads to alarming

rates of depression, anxiety, self-harm and suicide among children.

“Our federal agency tasked with addressing this crisis must have a strategy in place to meet this challenge,” Steil said. “Experts on mental health need to come together to give parents, teachers, and children the tools they need to promote positive mental health and protect our nation’s children online.”

[See the release.](#)

— U.S. Rep. Tom Tiffany on this week’s episode of WisPolitics Capitol Chats said he would consider supporting a clean debt limit increase if President Biden agreed to sign a bill to crack down on border security.

The Secure the Border Act is set for a vote in the House this week to coincide with the expiration of Title 42, a pandemic-era policy that allowed the United States to turn away migrants at the border due to public health concerns. Biden has indicated he will veto the proposal if it comes to his desk.

“I would personally — and I’m not speaking for leadership or anybody else — I would trade a \$1.5 trillion increase over the next year in the debt limit if President Biden would take our Secure the Border bill and call on Democrats to implement it into law,” the Minocqua Republican said. “That’s how important it is to secure our border with all the damage that’s being done to our country.”

Tiffany spokesperson Caroline Briscoe clarified Tiffany is open to the arrangement considering the “billions in savings securing the border would bring to taxpayers.”

The House has passed a GOP-led bill to raise the debt ceiling by \$1.5 trillion, but the bill also includes measures to cut domestic spending, including for Internal Revenue Service agents, nixes Biden’s plans for student loan forgiveness and repeals or alters renewable energy tax credits. The measure would save a projected \$4.8 trillion over ten years, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

[Listen to the full podcast.](#)

— U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson in a letter with 13 Republican colleagues defended the Supreme Court from what they say are Dem efforts to undermine public confidence in the high court.

Justice Clarence Thomas’ friendships and financial dealings have been the subject of

much scrutiny over the past few weeks after whistleblowers say he has close personal and financial ties to wealthy Republican donors. Senate Dems this week demanded real estate developer Harlan Crow provide a list of any gifts and other benefits he gave to Thomas.

The Republican senators in the letter called for an end to what they called attacks, arguing they're undermining the rule of law, endangering justices and their families, and "inflicting incalculable damage on our country."

"Justice Thomas is an honorable man, a principled jurist, and one of our nation's greatest justices," they wrote, adding there's nothing wrong in his relationship with Crow.

[See the letter.](#)

— The House Appropriations Committee is set to begin marking up appropriations bills next week.

U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, is the only Wisconsin member on the committee and signaled last week his eagerness to get to work on the process. Still, Pocan said he's waiting to see what sort of Republican spending plans come forward, as GOP leaders have been demanding future cuts in order to lift the debt ceiling.

The appropriations process determines discretionary spending for various government agencies and programs in areas such as defense, agriculture, education, energy and transportation.

Each of the 12 subcommittees get a bill to work on, and six are expected to begin next week, with the remaining half expected in early June.

Pocan is on the Financial Services and General Government, and Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittees.

Posts of the week

Today is VE Day, the anniversary of the allied victory over Nazi Germany.

My grandfather fought from N Africa through Italy to Germany from '42-'45. Thanks to him and all who served! pic.twitter.com/OI52FoVFtf

— Bryan Steil (@RepBryanSteil) [May 8, 2023](#)

Great to meet Ambassador Taranjit Singh Sandhu in [#DC](#) and discuss strengthening U.S.-India relations. pic.twitter.com/ZeGa7IY6oQ

— Rep. Glenn Grothman (@RepGrothman) [May 7, 2023](#)

Rep. Gallagher recently met with various financial and educational organizations to discuss this importance and highlight his bipartisan legislation, the Student Empowerment and Financial Literacy Act, which would help set up K-12 students for long-term financial success. pic.twitter.com/g3rxO4xhhM

— Rep. Gallagher Press Office (@RepGallagher) [May 9, 2023](#)

We should be prioritizing our Main Street, not Wall Street. It was great to meet with [@mainstreettweets](#) and Wisconsin small business leaders to discuss how we can work to support our small businesses, foster strong local economies, and help our entrepreneurs thrive. pic.twitter.com/PUNRnpnHNp

— Sen. Tammy Baldwin (@SenatorBaldwin) [May 9, 2023](#)

Happy to host [@UNRWA](#) Deputy Commissioner-General this morning to discuss how Congress can provide ongoing support to [#PalestineRefugees](#). pic.twitter.com/nFoEYbLa0

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

It was wonderful meeting with the Professional Insurance Agents of Wisconsin today. Thank you for stopping by! pic.twitter.com/lbHKmN56i9

— Rep. Scott Fitzgerald (@RepFitzgerald) [May 10, 2023](#)

ICYMI

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: Candidate Derrick Van Orden said earmarks would 'open the door to corruption.' In Congress, he's seeking \\$73 million](#)

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: Wisconsin U.S. Rep. Bryan Steil's committee tasked with election oversight hires an ex-Trump campaign aide tied to the fake elector scheme](#)

[WPR: Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis hints at presidential run in central Wisconsin appearance](#)