

DC Wrap: Pocan blasts Medicare Advantage ads as undermining Medicare while Johnson urges DHS to support the program

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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

“The Biden Administration wants your retirement plan to put politics ahead of your financial best interest. I’m proud to join @RepAndyBarr to stop this woke policy and ensure your retirement plan is focused on helping you secure your retirement.”

-U.S. Rep. Bryan Steil, R-Janesville, in a [tweet](#) blasting the administration’s environment, social and governance plan, which allows retirement planners to factor environmental and social issues into investment decisions.

“My legislation provides the framework necessary to both improve the fiscal outlook for Social Security & to improve the program so that it works better for vulnerable Americans, including students, parents, women, people of color, and low-income people.”

-U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore, D-Milwaukee, in a [tweet](#) touting her proposal, which would expand benefit eligibility for Social Security and more. See more on the bill below.

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This week's news

— U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan and two Dem colleagues introduced a bill to bar what they call the deceptive practice of private companies using “Medicare” in advertisements and plan titles.

The Madison Dem in a statement said the Save Medicare Act barring private Medicare Advantage providers from using the word “Medicare” to advertise their plans to consumers will also help stop those companies from overcharging the government for services provided.

Pocan also blasted the companies for undermining Medicare, which is free to many Americans who qualify.

“These non-Medicare plans run by private insurers undermine traditional Medicare,” he said. “They often leave patients without the benefits they need while overcharging the federal government for corporate profit.”

Pocan introduced the bill alongside U.S. Reps. Ro Khanna, of California, and Jan Schakowsky, of Illinois.

[See the statement.](#)

— Meanwhile U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson signed a letter with 56 colleagues in support of the Medicare Advantage program.

The Oshkosh Republican and others in the letter to Department of Health Services Administrator Brooks-LaSure argued Medicare Advantage covers nearly 30 million people with what they say is affordable and quality care. They also wrote that they are protecting services their constituents rely on.

“We ask that the Administration provide a stable rate and policy environment for Medicare Advantage that will strengthen and ensure the long-term sustainability of the program—protecting access to its important benefits on which our constituents have come to rely,” the letter reads.

[See the statement and letter.](#)

— Pocan also this morning introduced a bill aimed at protecting Social Security and Medicare benefits by making it more difficult for lawmakers

to reduce benefits.

The Protect Social Security and Medicare Act would raise the vote threshold to two-thirds in Congress on any measure that would reduce either program's benefits. Pocan introduced the bill with Dem colleague U.S. Reps. Lloyd Doggett, of Tex., and Maxwell Frost, of Flo. Pocan in a statement said the measure would stop proposals to cut benefits that lack widespread support.

"Medicare and Social Security are overwhelmingly popular for good reason – they provide critically important benefits to seniors and other vulnerable Americans," he said. "We all pay into both of these programs and are counting on them for essential healthcare and a dignified retirement."

[See the release.](#)

— U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore amid Republican proposals to reduce Social Security costs introduced a bill that would expand benefit eligibility.

The Milwaukee Dem's Social Security Enhancement and Protection Act would allow students under 26-years-old with retired, disabled or deceased parents to claim benefits. The bill would also increase benefits for those 20 years past retirement and increase funding for the program by eliminating a cap on payroll contributions, among other things.

The most senior member of Wisconsin's congressional delegation in a statement blasted Republican proposals to change Social Security.

"Amid Republican calls to make extreme reforms to our Social Security program – with proposals to cut benefits, subject them to annual discretionary spending reviews, or privatize the program – now more than ever, we need my legislation to strengthen Social Security," Moore said.

[See the release.](#)

— U.S. Rep. Glenn Grothman has introduced a bill aiming to boost employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

The legislation aims to correct confusion for community rehabilitation providers referring people with disabilities to jobs that fall under the category of competitive integrated employment — which includes both people with disabilities and workers

without disabilities. The definition was altered under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act in 2014.

The Glenbeulah Republican said the bill would allow people with disabilities to once again find a job or vocational training that fits their needs. Grothman said he had spoken to a constituent, Yael, who benefitted from the referral program, as well as disability advocates.

“After many meetings with these groups and tours of Community Rehabilitation Providers in Wisconsin’s Sixth District, such as RCS Empowers in Sheboygan and Lakeside Packaging in Neenah, it is obvious to see that individuals with disabilities want and deserve to have every employment option made available to them, and the right to choose which best fits their needs,” Grothman said in a statement.

Rick Wilson, a member of the disability advocacy group A-Team USA, said he was grateful for Grothman’s efforts.

“My son, who has Down Syndrome, has greatly benefitted from his participation in work center based prevocational services,” Wilson said in a statement. “Rep. Grothman’s bills will correct problems in current law and enable intellectually disabled individuals like my son to have the choice of where they want to work.”

[See Grothman’s release.](#)

— U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin applauded proposed guidelines from the Food and Drug Administration to update its blood donation eligibility policies to assess risks on an individual basis, rather than based on gender or sexual orientation.

The current FDA guidelines state men who have sex with men are prohibited from donating blood if they have had sex with other men in the past three months. Opponents have argued the policy unfairly targets gay men.

The proposal would eliminate that requirement, and instead ask all potential donors about their sexual history in the past three months. Possible donors who say they have had a new sexual partner in the past three months and indicate a history of anal sex in the past three months would be deferred from donating.

The Madison Dem, who previously called on the agency to eliminate the policy amid a blood shortage in 2020, in a statement called the ban “discriminatory and

medically unnecessary.” Baldwin, who is gay, said the ban would focus on individual risk factors instead of “outdated stigmas that effectively ban gay and bisexual men.”

“This will increase the eligible donor base to help ensure that those who need blood can get it and marks a step forward in our fight for LGBTQ+ equality,” Baldwin said. This important progress was made possible by the countless advocates who, even in the face of adversity, made sure we centered science and fought for the LGBTQ+ community.”

[See the release.](#)

— U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson is again introducing a bill that would bar U.S. aid to foreign countries from funding abortion services overseas.

The American Values Act would bar all aid foreign nations receive through the Foreign Assistance Act from funding the performance or promotion of abortions, forced sterilizations, or biomedical research relating to abortions or forced sterilizations. The measure would also bar the Peace Corps from using government funds to pay for abortions, among other things.

The Oshkosh Republican in a statement blasted Dems who support U.S. aid funding abortions and abortion-related services.

“The Biden administration’s use of American taxpayer dollars to fund and promote abortion providers overseas proves once again that Democrats are the extremists when it comes to abortion,” he said. “U.S. foreign assistance should be used as a national security tool, not as a way for the left to export their agenda.”

[See Johnson’s statement.](#)

— House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party Chair U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher said he’s thrilled to have Dem U.S. Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi as the committee’s ranking member.

The Allouez Republican in a statement said he’s excited to work with the Illinois physician on addressing CCP ideological, economic and military threats this session. While not every committee assignment this session is final, both served on the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence in the last session.

Gallagher also said the committee will continue to draw distinctions between the CCP and Chinese people, adding what the CCP fears most is bipartisan work to combat its malign interests.

“The CCP thinks it will be easy to divide us along partisan lines, but I look forward to working with Rep. Krishnamoorthi and my colleagues across the aisle to prove them wrong,” he said. “If a Democratic Bears fan and Republican Packers fan can do it, anyone can.”

[See the statement.](#)

— Gallagher in this week’s Capitol Chats episode talked more in-depth about his goals for the committee, explained what it will take to raise the debt ceiling and applauded the recent decision to send U.S. tanks to Ukraine.

[Listen to Capitol Chats.](#)

— U.S. Reps. Tom Tiffany and Derrick Van Orden were appointed to subcommittee chairmanships this week.

Tiffany will chair the House Natural Resources Committee’s Subcommittee on Federal Lands.

“I look forward to protecting multiple-use values on America’s public lands, prioritizing better management of those lands, modernizing antiquated and cumbersome laws, and holding the Biden administration accountable for their mismanagement of America’s natural resources,” the Minocqua Republican said.

And Prairie du Chien Republican Van Orden, a former Navy SEAL, was appointed chairman of the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs’ Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity.

“If we can house tens of thousands of illegal immigrants each month, there is not an excuse for a single homeless veteran in this nation,” Van Orden said. “Supporting veterans’ mental health and financial fitness needs to be a priority for America, and will be for this committee.”

— U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson announced he will serve on three committees this session.

Those are:

- *The Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee;
- *The Finance Committee; and
- *The Budget Committee.

The latter two are new assignments.

Previously he served on:

- *The Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee; and
- *The Foreign Relations Committee.

— Gallagher finished 2022 with just under \$3 million in the bank, the biggest war chest among members of Wisconsin's House delegation.

The year-end reports cover activity between Nov. 29 and Dec. 31. None of the state's eight members showed much fundraising during that window.

Gallagher [listed](#) \$8,188 in total contributions and \$53,228 in expenditures.

Here are topline numbers for the rest of the delegation:

*Bryan Steil, R-Janesville, had \$1.5 million cash on hand. Steil [listed](#) \$13,174 in contributions and \$23,483 in expenses.

*Mark Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, [reported](#) \$992,690 in the bank after collecting \$9,273 and spending \$32,718.

*Derrick Van Orden, R-Prairie du Chien, [reported](#) \$173,566 cash on hand. He listed \$84,927 in receipts, \$66,534 in expenses and \$40,744 in debts.

*Gwen Moore, D-Milwaukee, had the least amount of cash on hand at \$22,350. She [listed](#) contributions of \$38,803 and \$51,781 in expenses.

*U.S. Rep. Scott Fitzgerald, R-Juneau, had \$392,830 in the bank after [raising](#) \$3,575 and spending \$12,809.

*U.S. Rep. Glenn Grothman, R-Glenbeulah, had \$537,727 in the bank. He [listed](#) \$1,991 in contributions and \$13,973 in expenditures.

*U.S. Rep. Tom Tiffany, R-Minocqua, [reported](#) \$339,670 in the bank. His report listed

\$1,851 in contributions and \$16,247 in expenses.

Posts of the week

Pleasure to welcome [@BorisJohnson](#) to our [@RepublicanStudy](#) lunch today.

Great to speak with you regarding the need to uphold individual liberties and promote human rights on the world stage. pic.twitter.com/TDAIjiOfYJ

— Rep. Glenn Grothman (@RepGrothman) [February 1, 2023](#)

Today marks the first day of [#BlackHistoryMonth](#), a month honoring the shared stories & contributions of Black Americans who have shaped our nation. As we celebrate this month, we must continue working to amplify Black voices because Black history is American history. pic.twitter.com/kfQchjCoWR

— Sen. Tammy Baldwin (@SenatorBaldwin) [February 1, 2023](#)

Rep. Van Orden is on the way to his first committee hearing! [@TransportGOP](#) will be hearing from experts on supply chain challenges. pic.twitter.com/UyUCmFLdFk

— Rep. Derrick Van Orden Press Office (@RepVanOrden) [February 1, 2023](#)

This [#BlackHistoryMonth](#) we commemorate all the contributions of Black Americans and are reminded of the distance we still need to go to achieve justice, equality, and prosperity for all.

— Rep. Mark Pocan (@RepMarkPocan) [February 1, 2023](#)

It is an honor to be selected by Chairman [@RepWesterman](#) to lead the Subcommittee on Federal Lands.

I look forward to protecting multiple-use values on America's public lands and prioritizing better management of our lands. [@NatResources](#) is ready to deliver results. pic.twitter.com/GWN3bzbgtF

— Rep. Tom Tiffany (@RepTiffany) [February 1, 2023](#)

Wisconsinite Laurel Clark was a doctor, Navy captain, mother & Mission Specialist dedicated to living life to the fullest.

20 years ago, she lost her life alongside six others in the fateful Columbia Space Shuttle disaster.

Today, we honor her legacy & celebrate her bravery.
pic.twitter.com/bRnfSnw8xj

— Senator Ron Johnson (@SenRonJohnson) [February 1, 2023](#)

ICYMI

[Does House Bill Qualify Medicare As 'Socialist'?, Democrats Ask](#)

[Mike Gallagher on Connecting the China Dots for Congress](#)

[Johnson reintroduces bipartisan bill to prevent shutdown amid debt ceiling fight](#)

[Senator Tammy Baldwin discusses Farmland Security Act](#)