

Baldwin calls on Republicans to engage with Dems over DHS funding

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U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin at a WisPolitics-State Affairs luncheon said Republicans need to get engaged in negotiations with Democrats over funding for the Department of Homeland Security amid a shutdown of the agency.

The agency has been shut down since Feb. 13 as Baldwin, D-Madison, and fellow Senate Dems have urged measures to ensure the agency is held accountable following the killing of two American citizens in Minneapolis last month by immigration agents.

Republicans have criticized Dems' demands, pointing to the shutdown's impacts on the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Transportation Security Administration and the Coast Guard.

"I need my Republican colleagues in the Senate to engage. So far, they have just said this is a negotiation with the White House. They need to understand that ... we are the legislative branch and that this is a bill that we crafted," Baldwin said at Thursday's event in Madison.

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Baldwin noted several measures Dems are seeking to rein in DHS, such as requiring immigration agents to wear body cameras and identify themselves, requiring the use of warrants, prohibiting agents from wearing masks and putting a stop to roving patrols. She said of ICE agents: "We've got to rein them in."

Baldwin said when Americans voted to elect President Donald Trump, they wanted "lawless, undocumented" immigrants who had engaged in violent crime or threats to be targeted for arrest and deportation.

“But the idea of just roving gangs that can do racial profiling, pick up people with an accent or who look like they’re not their idea of American is outrageous,” Baldwin said.

Baldwin has called on DHS Secretary Kristi Noem to resign.

The United States has immigration laws and there needs to be agencies to enforce those laws, Baldwin said. She added that the country’s immigration laws are “broken” and it’s up to Congress to fix them.

Baldwin also weighed in on the vulnerable rural health care landscape in Wisconsin.

“Many are on the edge,” Baldwin said of rural hospitals. “We probably have about a dozen rural hospitals in Wisconsin that are really facing the risk of either closing at some point in the near future or reducing services significantly, whether that’s, you know, usually meaning closing a department that’s losing money, so emergency room, delivery room or mental health services.”

She noted the One Big Beautiful Bill Act included a projected nearly \$1 trillion in cuts to Medicaid spending over a decade. The bill also included a new \$50 billion rural health care fund, the Rural Health Transformation Program, but Baldwin said the new program won’t provide nearly enough support.

“It will not bridge the gap,” Baldwin said.

She noted half of the \$50 billion will be shared equally, and the other half will go toward a competitive grant program.

“We’re going to see some closures, I think, here in Wisconsin because of that,” Baldwin said. “I’m very worried about how those with such thin margins will be able to adapt to a much higher percentage of patients they see not (having) insurance. And we also know that the direct consequence of being uninsured is not seeking care at the earliest stages of something going wrong.”

Baldwin also said the United States shouldn’t go to war with Iran amid escalating tensions between the country and the Trump administration over its nuclear program. She pointed out that she voted for the Iran nuclear deal in 2015, and then Trump “ripped it up.”

“That’s what gets us into this place, and now he wants to start a war. The American

people do not want another war,” Baldwin said.