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DC Wrap: Dems knock Trump on affordability, health care following State of the Union as Republicans praise record-long speech

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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.

Quotes of the week

The President has been illegally raising the price of your groceries for over a year, and now he's doubling down on his disastrous trade war. This only sends the message that he is not focused or even trying to lower your costs.
– U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, on President Donald Trump's State of the Union.

Democrats would not stand for that. They sat on their hands.
– U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh, on WisPolitics' "Capitol Chats" podcast responding to Trump asking members of Congress to stand if they agree that "the first duty of the American government is to protect American citizens, not illegal aliens."

This week's news

— Wisconsin Republicans praised President Donald Trump's record-long State of the Union speech this week, while Dems knocked the president on affordability, health care and more.

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Speaking shortly after the end of the speech Tuesday night, U.S. Rep. Scott Fitzgerald, R-Juneau, called Trump's speech "masterful" and a "phenomenal job."

He singled out the president's remarks on affordability as a policy point he expected to hit home with Wisconsinites.

"The affordability question he hit head-on by bringing it up himself and then laid out some of the things that the administration can do and then called on Congress to act," Fitzgerald said.

In his remarks, Trump claimed credit for cooling inflation – though he at times exaggerated or claimed price declines where inflation had only decreased. He also touted TrumpRx and a health care plan announced last month, plus called on Congress to pass a ban on Wall Street investment firms buying single-family homes.

And he called the affordability issue a "dirty, rotten lie" perpetuated by Democrats.

The latest ABC News/Washington Post/Ipsos poll shows a third of Americans trust Trump to reduce the cost of living, with a nearly equal share saying they trust the Democrats more.

Some 57% of voters disapprove of his handling of the economy, and a plurality of voters say the economy has gotten worse since he took office. Meanwhile, a new Marquette University Law School poll of Wisconsin voters this week found 49% of voters were "very concerned" about jobs and the economy.

Fitzgerald also cited Trump's remarks about housing and immigration, where he defended his deportation campaign and sought to shame Democrats on the issue.

"He drove home the point that we inherited a mess; this was not created by Republicans but we are expected to fix it now," Fitzgerald said.

U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh, also praised Trump's speech in an interview yesterday on WisPolitics' "Capitol Chats" podcast.

Johnson reserved most of his remarks to scorn Democrats, highlighting a moment when members of the opposing party largely did not stand in response to Trump's call for members of Congress to stand to show "the first duty of the American government is to protect American citizens, not illegal aliens."

“Democrats would not stand for that. They sat on their hands,” Johnson said.

— Following the speech, U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan said it was “two hours of my life I’m never going to get back.”

Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, said Trump told “lie after lie after lie,” including about lowering costs for Americans on prescription drugs and goods.

He also shared a photo of himself standing up and pointing next to U.S. Rep. Rashida Tlaib, D-Mich., who heckled Trump during the speech with U.S. Rep. Ilhan Omar, D-Minn.

“My reaction to the most corrupt president in history claiming he’s going to fight corruption,” Pocan labeled the photo.

U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore knocked Trump on tax cuts for hedge funds and cuts to Medicaid for nursing home residents.

“That’s the fine print of the ‘big, beautiful bill’ Donald Trump is bragging about to the entire nation right now,” the Milwaukee Dem said.

Meanwhile, U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin joined her guest, Kim Fredrick of Mindoro, ahead of the speech to knock the nearly $1 trillion in cuts to Medicaid over 10 years in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act.

Fredrick on the call told reporters her 18-year-old son Matt, who has Down syndrome, needs 24-hour care and has benefited from Medicaid since he was born. Fredrick raised concerns the cuts could jeopardize programs that teach job and independent living skills or provide at-home care for people like her son.

“In the past, knowing that, well, there’s these programs in place, they could send people to our house to help us, you know, he would have a day program to go to, things like that — that is all up in the air right now,” Fredrick said.

Some congressional Democrats opted against attending the speech to protest the Trump administration. Baldwin said attending with Fredrick is an opportunity to fight back.

“I think it’s important to show up, and that doesn’t mean that I am necessarily going to be approving of this president’s message, but he is the president, and it

was important for me to not only be there to witness, but also to have Kim with me," Baldwin said.

Moore and Pocan also brought guests to highlight Trump administration policies.

Pocan brought Rock County farmer and Wisconsin Soybean Association President Doug Rebout to draw attention to the impact of tariffs on farmers. Moore brought Tara Pitt-D'Andrea, executive director of Milwaukee's Renaissance Child Development Center, to emphasize the importance of Affordable Care Act premium tax credits.

— During his speech, the president put new pressure on Senate Republicans to pass a restrictive voter ID bill.

Trump called out Senate Majority Leader John Thune of South Dakota by name as he exhorted the Senate to pass the SAVE America Act.

Wisconsin's congressional delegation is split along party lines over the bill.

Thune has promised a vote on the bill, which would require U.S. citizens to show proof of citizenship to vote in federal elections, but warned the bill did not have enough votes to clear the Senate's 60-vote filibuster rule.

Wisconsin requires voters to show ID in order to vote, but the SAVE America Act would further limit eligible forms of identification.

Some GOP senators are calling for Republicans to use existing rules to force a "talking filibuster" and to tire out opposing Democrats in a procedural battle of attrition. The move is considered a long shot.

U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson has called for the Republicans to change the chamber's rules to pass the SAVE America Act – known informally as "nuking the filibuster" – warning that the GOP would "look like schmucks" if they didn't."

He further claimed on "Capitol Chats" that Democrats "want to make it easy to cheat" and that the bill was necessary to combat voter fraud, though research has shown little evidence of widespread voter fraud.

A Wisconsin Elections Commission report found 46 cases of suspected voter fraud in the 2024 election, out of some 3.4 million ballots cast.

— Trump also threw his support behind U.S. Rep. Bryan Steil's Stop Insider Trading Act.

Steil has touted his bill as the "most transformational" effort to regulate stock trading by members of Congress in years.

"Let's get it done!" the Janesville Republican wrote on X shortly after Trump's remarks.

The bill would bar members of Congress and their immediate family from purchasing new stock and require members to notify their intent to sell their current stock holdings at least a week in advance of the sale.

However, experts – including two WisPolitics interviewed last month – note the bill includes broad loopholes for family members and excludes certain financial instruments, like cryptocurrency.

Democrats have criticized the bill as a watered-down version of more comprehensive stock trading legislation, with U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore, D-Milwaukee, calling it a "bare minimum" effort last month.

— Vice President JD Vance will be in Plover today to speak at a machining facility as a follow-up stop to the State of the Union.

It will be Vance's first visit to Wisconsin since August, when he was in La Crosse. Both stops are in the 3rd CD, where GOP U.S. Rep. Derrick Van Orden, of Prairie du Chien, is a top Dem target this fall.

WisDems mocked Van Orden this week for video showing the lawmaker failing to get Trump's attention to shake hands as the president walked by.

Dem Party spokesperson Phil Shulman called Vance the only person more unlikable than Van Orden, "so to the Vice President we say thank you for putting such a bright and horrible spotlight on a candidate who helped pass the biggest cut to Medicaid in history, took SNAP away from kids, veterans, and the elderly, voted to end ACA funding, and is all-in-all just a walking red flag."

— The DCCC announced Rebecca Cooke is among the 12 Dem House candidates added to its program seeking to flip GOP-held seats this fall.

Those in the “Red to Blue” program receive staff resources, training and fundraising support. They earn a spot by meeting certain benchmarks, including fundraising goals.

Cooke pulled in $1.2 million in receipts during the fourth quarter, outraising GOP U.S. Rep. Derrick Van Orden, who pulled in $931,453 for the period. Cooke also cut into Van Orden’s cash on hand advantage in the period, finishing 2025 with more than $2.5 million in the bank, compared to his $2.7 million.

Cooke, who runs a nonprofit, lost to Van Orden, R-Prairie du Chien, by 2.7 percentage points in 2024. He was the only GOP House incumbent in Wisconsin to underperform Donald Trump in their district that fall.

— 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 the event in Madison.

Read more from the luncheon with Baldwin here.

— U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson said he blames “awful and ambiguous laws” for last week’s Supreme Court decision striking down Trump’s global tariffs.

“I’ve read both the opinion and the dissents, and justices on both sides make very good points, so I primarily blame Congress for writing very ambiguous and really sloppy bills,” Johnson said on “Capitol Chats.”

The court in a 6-3 ruling said Trump's argument that a 1977 law implicitly authorized the tariffs overstated the scope of the president's authority.

"Had Congress intended to convey the distinct and extraordinary power to impose tariffs, it would have done so expressly," Chief Justice John Roberts wrote in the majority opinion.

Three conservative justices, Samuel Alito, Brett Kavanaugh and Clarence Thomas, dissented.

The ruling did not address whether the government would have to issue refunds to companies that have paid the tariffs.

Johnson said he wished the court had ruled to keep current tariff revenue in Treasury coffers and then apply the decision going forward.

Trump has indicated he will seek other legal avenues to reenact the tariffs.

Posts of the week

> I had a great meeting with Oconto County Sheriff Todd Skarban and Jail Administrator Carol Koop this past week and appreciated the opportunity to tour the county jail.
>
> I'm grateful for their leadership and to the entire department who work tirelessly every day to keep Oconto… pic.twitter.com/QPEP7tqO0M
>
> — Rep. Tony Wied (@RepTonyWied) February 24, 2026

> My guest for today's SOTU is my constituent Kara Pitt D'Andrea. As a small business owner of a nonprofit daycare and advocate for the ACA, I couldn't be more excited to have someone in the audience tonight who is a voice for the things Americans really care about: affordable… pic.twitter.com/6bb0phTdLH
>
> — Rep. Gwen Moore (@RepGwenMoore) February 24, 2026

> I visited Marten Transport in Mondovi, a Wisconsin success story, that grew one milk truck to 3.5K trucks nationwide.
>
> We talked about how Congress can back companies like Marten so Wisconsin trucking keeps America moving. pic.twitter.com/uvuCP4gT1U
>
> — Rep. Derrick Van Orden (@RepVanOrden) February 22, 2026

ICYMI

Wisconsin Public Radio: US Attorney General endorses call to make tribe repay town in Northwoods roads dispute

Spectrum News 1: Wisconsin Congressman takes aim at marriage penalties

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: National Democrats highlight Rebecca Cooke in 'Red to Blue' program

Wisconsin Public Radio: Half the candidates for Wisconsin House seat recently lived outside district or state

The Ripon Advance: Steil cosponsors bill for new Civil War memorials to honor Wisconsinites

Spectrum News 1: 'Resounding rejection:' Wisconsin lawmakers react to SCOTUS striking down Trump's tariffs