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#### Johnson backs bill to delist gray wolf, while Baldwin remains noncommittal

A U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson spokesman says the Oshkosh Republican would back a bill aiming to delist the gray wolf in all but two states should it be taken up in the Senate.

But the office of U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin didn’t say whether she’d support the legislation from 7th CD U.S. Rep. Sean Duffy seeking to remove the wolves from the Endangered Species Act. The bill, which cleared the House earlier this month, would lift protections for the wolves across the continental United States.

A Johnson spokesman this week noted Johnson has been working on the issue “for a while.” Johnson in 2015 introduced a bill that would direct the Department of the Interior to reissue final rules related to the endangered listing of the gray wolf in Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota and Wyoming. He reintroduced the legislation last year.

But a Baldwin spokeswoman in an email expressed preference for the Madison Democrat’s HELP for Wildlife Act, which would delist the gray wolf in Wyoming and the western Great Lakes as well as reauthorize and provide funding for a series of conservation programs.

The spokeswoman noted Duffy’s bill “has not yet come up in the Senate” and didn’t answer whether Baldwin would vote for the Wausau Republican’s legislation if it does hit the floor.

The comments follow the House passage of Duffy’s “Manage Our Wolves Act.” The bipartisan legislation — passed on a 196-180 vote — aims to remove the gray wolf from the list of endangered or threatened species and reinstate a rule that removed the gray wolf in the western Great Lakes region from the list.

“If you live in Wisconsin, especially northern Wisconsin, it might be necessary for us to actually manage this population because it's good for the environment,” Duffy said in a statement following the bill’s passage. “Frankly, I believe that our states are far more in tuned in understanding the ecosystem of their state than bureaucrats in Washington.”

The legislation garnered support from U.S. Reps. Mike Gallagher, R-Green Bay; Glenn Grothman, R-Glenbeulah; and Ron Kind, D-La Crosse. U.S. Reps. Mark Pocan, D-Town of Vermont; and Gwen Moore, D-Milwaukee, voted against the bill, while U.S. Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner, R-Menomonee Falls, did not vote.

State Sen. Tom Tiffany, R-Minocqua, praised Duffy’s work and urged Baldwin to back the bill in a joint statement last week with Michigan Sen. Tom Casperson.

Tiffany this session introduced a bill that would ban police from enforcing state or federal law aimed at managing Wisconsin’s wolf population. The language would also prohibit the state Department of Natural Resources from spending any money to manage wolves — other than paying claims for any losses they cause.

The Obama administration in 2012 first delisted the gray wolf in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan. In 2014, the wolves were returned to the federal endangered species list after a lawsuit, resulting in the end of wolf trapping and hunting.

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