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**Gallagher raises profile on China, defense issues**

By WisPolitics.com

Thirty-nine-year-old U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher has only been in Congress since 2017.

Yet, Democrats didn't oppose him in his 2022 reelection race. He rolled to a big victory in the once swingy 8th Congressional District of Wisconsin with more than 70 percent of the vote.

Now he is mentioned as a possible U.S. Senate candidate against veteran Democrat Sen. Tammy Baldwin of Madison. And he is raising his profile on China and defense issues.

The Allouez Republican, a former Marine intelligence officer, is a member of the House Armed Services Committee and leads the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party.

Gallagher recently did a phone interview with WisPolitics.com staff. Here are some highlights:

-- He 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. He doubts any real defense budget cuts would pass the Republican-controlled House, adding 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.

-- He says China is the biggest threat to America right now. Prioritizing where defense spending goes is also important, and should 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.”

— He signals 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.”

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