

# Baldwin hears variety of concerns at Colonial Club

By Vivian Obarski  
*Regional Reporter*

In preparation for the fall session of Congress, Second District Congressional Rep. Tammy Baldwin held a listening session that covered topics ranging from prescription drugs to foreign relations and drilling for oil in Alaska at the Colonial Club Senior Activity Center, 301 Blankenheim Lane, on Thursday afternoon.

The listening session is one of several that Baldwin held in communities around Dane County before she returns to Washington D.C. for the fall.

"I have concerns with environmental protection," said Sun Prairie resident Dot Havens about the proposal to drill for oil in Alaska. "I'm disappointed with the Alaskan wildlife proposal."

The representative said she voted against the proposal for a variety of reasons, including economic.

"The U.S. Geological Survey said if this was tapped it would provide enough oil for six months and it could take up to 10 years," Baldwin said. "That makes it not worth it in my mind."

Several Sun Prairie residents said they were concerned with United States relationship with foreign countries.

"It was a debacle in losing the vote in the human rights issue," said Tom Brown about a bill regarding the International Criminal Court. "It was



Rep. Tammy Baldwin

arrogant that we chose to be absent for six to eight weeks.

"I'm surprised that (other countries' representatives) even said 'Good morning,' to us," he added.

Brown also said the United States should pay its dues to the United Nations.

"I feel frustrated with the leadership of the House," Brown said. "They're not willing to cooperate."

While Baldwin defended Secretary of State Colin Powell, she said it was a concern that legislators couldn't offer input on foreign situations.

"It's a vexing problem," Baldwin admitted. "We have no direct contact with diplomats or leaders ... we need to teach the electorate to take seriously foreign matters."

In relation to foreign issues, Sun Prairie resident Jim Riley said he was opposed implementing a fast-track option for legislation regarding foreign relations.

"I don't think that (the North American Free Trade Agreement) needs

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# ★ Baldwin session airs concerns including drugs, environment

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to go further without standards," he said.

Riley also said if a company chooses to leave the country, they should be held accountable for the impact that's left behind.

"I know that we're in a global economy and I think we should have higher standards," Riley said.

According to Baldwin, fast-track legislation would allow certain bills to be voted on quickly by requiring that Congress and the Senate pass a bill on a yes/no vote.

"Fast-track is interesting in notion," Baldwin said.

One example the Congresswoman mentioned is using fast-track legislation

for foreign negotiation.

But Baldwin said she wasn't sure if she could support the proposal the way it currently stands.

"I would not give up the power you gave me to represent your interests lightly," she said.

The only way Baldwin said she might support fast-track legislation is if there is an assurance that trade will either be helped or not harm the environment and protect the rights of a labor force.

"If these issues are given the same weight as commercial trade, then I can support fast-track," Baldwin said.

Sun Prairie resident Lee Brown said she was concerned about the number of nuclear weapons the United States still has.

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-- Rep. Tammy Baldwin

"It's hard to believe that nuclear weapons make anything safe," she said.

Lee Brown also said she opposed proposals to have weapons in space.

Baldwin responded that she supported a legislative proposal showing opposition to weapons in space.

idea."

## Prescription drug bill concerns voiced

Barbara Bailey, executive director of the Colonial Club, said she remains concerned about the current prescription drug bill that would force seniors to purchase drugs by mail order.

"First, the pricing isn't that much of a break," she said. "It's a 10 percent discount -- you can do better or just as well locally.

"People also are not informed well about medications," said Bailey about using a mail order prescription service. "With mail order you can't ask questions."

Baldwin replied that she heard similar concerns about the proposal

from pharmacists during other listening sessions.

"I don't see pharmacies or pharmacists as the problem," Baldwin said. "I think that the price is controlled at the point of manufacture."

As a result, Baldwin said drug companies -- not pharmacies -- should be the focus of price discussion.

Countries such as Canada can receive a discount for prescription drugs because the nation bargains on behalf of all of its citizens, Baldwin said.

"Canada is buying drugs on behalf of all people," she said. "They have some bargaining power with companies.

"One idea is to ask Medicare to be a bargaining agent," Baldwin said. "Then people would have a good deal."

With all the discussion about defense, the representative said a colleague, Congressman Dennis Kucinich of Ohio, has written a bill to create a Department of Peace.

"At first I looked at it and thought, 'What is he thinking?'" Baldwin said. "Then it struck me as, 'What a refreshing