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Baldwin discusses problems pertinent to Wisconsinites

by Carrie Breneman, News Reporter
April 08, 2004

Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, spoke to students about health care, the war in Iraq and higher education during a Brown Bag Lunch at Memorial Union Wednesday.

Baldwin began by reflecting on her connection to the University of Wisconsin campus. Her mother was an undergraduate at UW when Baldwin was born, and her maternal grandparents both worked at UW. Baldwin herself also attended law school at UW.

During her recent two-week break from work in Washington, she has been talking to Wisconsinites.

"The concerns of the people that I represent are at complete disconnect with the priorities of this White House and the priorities of this Republican Congress and that causes me great concern," Baldwin said.

She said people of Wisconsin are concerned with jobs and job loss, including the stagnation of wages and the rise of health insurance premiums. She also mentioned concerns surrounding the war in Iraq.

Baldwin said instead of concentrating on issues important to the public, especially those in Wisconsin, Congress has wasted valuable time and money investigating sending people to Mars and the use of steroids in Major League Baseball.

In order to give people an impression of who benefits and who is harmed by President Bush's proposed tax cuts, Baldwin made an analogy to the "Simple Life," comparing the tax cuts of hotel heiress Paris Hilton and the Arkansas farm family that hosted her.

"We can only guess because we don't know the details of her tax returns, but she can at minimum enjoy a \$150,000 tax cut this year ... the average farm family can expect a \$575 tax cut. That contrast is so striking," Baldwin said.

Baldwin noted this tax cut would affect the ever-increasing deficit and further cuts to programs that are already poorly funded, such as education programs, public health programs and veteran services. She sees these as strong investments in the future.

Baldwin also expressed the need for the current generation of students to get involved in political affairs, noting that her mother's generation helped end the Vietnam War and segregation policies in the United



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States.

In late April or early May, the Education and Work Force Committee is expected to meet and talk over issues of higher education, according to Baldwin. She said there are a few bills which she hopes would form the basis of the committee's discussion, including increasing the maximum Pell Grant level with inflation and improvements in consolidating college loans.

As far as the war in Iraq, Baldwin did not feel an imminent threat from Iraq was present when voting on whether to support the use of force or not. Baldwin drafted a letter to President Bush asking questions such as how success was going to be measured, when the troops will return home and the cost of the war, before voting on the use of force.

Baldwin also spoke regarding her opposition to President Bush's plan to use \$87 million for reconstruction in Iraq. She said she felt the president's request left too many questions unanswered.

"I'll give you the dollars when you give me the answers," Baldwin said.

Baldwin said she thinks the United States should have continued to work with the global community, and noted people should be joining the coalition instead of leaving it.

Baldwin added that it has been important for her to work with conservative Republicans in passing bills because those bills will then gain bipartisan support from all Congress representatives when they are voted on.

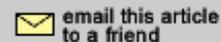
Mike Pfohl, a UW senior majoring in political science and a chair of the College Democrats, said he attended the event because he is a supporter of Baldwin. Pfohl said he knew Baldwin was active on the UW campus and was impressed Baldwin knew details of everything she addressed in her speech. ■

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