

U.S. Rep. Sensenbrenner: Town hall weekend wrap-up: March 11-12

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BROOKFIELD, WI - Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner held three town hall meetings throughout Wisconsin's Fifth Congressional District this past weekend, meeting with constituents of all political ideology in Germantown, Brookfield, and Hartford. Despite repeated calls for civility, a number of meetings were marred by disruption and antagonistic antics from some participants.

Congressman Sensenbrenner holds more than 100 such events annually. Since the beginning of the year, he has held more than 40 meetings in communities throughout Wisconsin's Fifth Congressional District, and although there has been a significant increase in attendance in recent weeks, for the most part, these gatherings have been civil, despite political and policy differences.

However, the mutual respect that has helped make these events successful seems to be deteriorating thanks to crowds of agitators, who rather than participating to discuss legitimate concerns, instead used disorderly tactics which brought meetings to a halt on several occasions. There is a recurring pattern of the same attendees showing up at each meeting to ask the same questions they already posed at previous town halls. It's clear they are well-aware of the Congressman's position on the issues, and unfortunately their repeated questions rob others in attendance of their opportunity to have their questions answered.

Coarse tactics, such as yelling "shut up" at the Congressman while he responded to questions, and exaggerated and needlessly loud yawning during his answers forced repeated pauses during meetings and took time away from other constituents hoping to speak to the Congressman. They transformed the atmosphere of the

room into one more akin to a middle school classroom than that of a town hall meeting.

These tactics have been seen at other Republican town hall meetings nationwide, but have not been as intense at Congressman Sensenbrenner's meetings until recently. They come on the heels of weeks of meetings that operated under feelings of general respect, where many constituents with opposing viewpoints took time to thank the Congressman for being accessible, even though they disagreed with him on policy matters.

Congressman Sensenbrenner: "Over the years, there have been contentious national issues that brought passionate constituents to my meetings, but I have rarely seen the type of blatant disruption that I saw this past weekend. I have always run my meetings on the basis of mutual respect, and everyone who openly broke that did a great disservice to their fellow constituents who came to honestly discuss an issue with me. We can disagree without being disagreeable; this is not how democracy is supposed to work."

Many of the agitators at the past weekend's town hall meetings belong to a national protest group, whose core mission is to resist the Republican agenda and disrupt civil discourse at Republican town hall meetings throughout the country.

Despite these efforts, Congressman Sensenbrenner has continued to speak directly to his constituents at town hall meetings. He will hold six more town hall meetings this month in the communities of West Bend, West Allis, Richfield, Newburg, Kewaskum, and Addison. For information on these, and other upcoming meetings, you can visit his official website at <http://sensenbrenner.house.gov/contact>.