

Wis. Dems slam AG Sessions, who recuses himself from any campaign investigations

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Dems on the state's congressional delegation are slamming Attorney General Jeff Sessions for not disclosing his prior communications with a Russian official, though Sessions said today he'd recuse himself from any investigations on the 2016 elections.

House Speaker Paul Ryan defended Sessions, saying it's "really common for members of Congress to meet with ambassadors." Before becoming Trump's AG, Sessions represented Alabama in the Senate and was in the Armed Services Committee. He also was a surrogate for Trump during the campaign.

The Washington Post reported yesterday Sessions spoke to Russia's U.S. ambassador twice, citing Justice Department officials. But Sessions didn't disclose those conversations during his Senate confirmation hearings.

Sessions told reporters today his two discussions last year with the ambassador didn't relate to the presidential campaign.

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"Let me be clear," he said. "I never had meetings with Russian operatives or Russian intermediaries about the Trump campaign."

He also said today that since he was a Trump surrogate, he agreed with his staff's recommendation and would recuse himself from any investigations on what role Russia played in the 2016 elections.

"I have followed the right procedure, just as I promised the [Judiciary] Committee I

would," Sessions said.

Some Dems, including U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, and a handful of Republicans earlier had called on Sessions to recuse himself from those investigations.

Ahead of Session's announcement, Baldwin repeated her request from two weeks ago that he recuse himself and appoint an independent special counsel to look into the issue.

"We need a full, independent, impartial, transparent investigation into all the facts," the Madison Dem said.

Johnson addressed the topic in a telephone town hall this morning before Sessions announced he'd recuse himself. At that town hall, Johnson pointed to Sessions' past comments that he'd recuse himself from any investigations as needed and that Johnson took "him at his word."

U.S. Reps. Mark Pocan and Gwen Moore went further than Baldwin, calling for Sessions to resign or be removed from his post for withholding information from the committee.

Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, said Sessions needs to resign because "lying under oath about contacts with Russian officials supersedes recusal."

Moore, D-Milwaukee, said Sessions should "be removed from his post immediately" and called for an independent investigation led by a special prosecutor. She also said if Trump isn't willing to go through such an investigation, she thinks "it would be appropriate for the House of Representatives to move forward with impeachment proceedings."

During Sessions' confirmation hearing on Jan. 10, Sen. Al Franken, D-Minn., asked Sessions what he would do if any evidence came out that the Trump campaign communicated with the Russian government during the course of the campaign.

Sessions responded during the hearing that he was "not aware of those activities," and as a surrogate during the campaign, he "did not have communications with the Russians."

Sessions told reporters today his response was "honest and correct as I understood it at the time" and that the discussions he had with the Russian official didn't

involve the campaign. Sessions said he would write to the Judiciary Committee explaining that.

At his weekly news conference this morning, Ryan accused Dems of once again “lighting their hair on fire” to get press attention on ties between Trump’s administration and Russia.

Ryan, R-Janesville, also said he and others on the Hill have never “ever seen any evidence presented to us that an American or a person in the Trump campaign was involved or working with the Russians.”

[Watch Ryan’s news conference](#)

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