

Baldwin, Johnson split on CIA director nomination vote

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U.S. Sens. Tammy Baldwin and Ron Johnson today split on the nomination of Gina Haspel, who was confirmed as CIA director despite her involvement in the agency's torture program.

Hours before the Senate voted 54-45 to confirm her as the first female CIA director, Baldwin announced she wouldn't support Haspel's nomination. Baldwin cited her past actions under then-President George W. Bush and recent comments she made about the CIA's use of torture during that period.

The Madison Dem has been under fire from GOP opponent Leah Vukmir over the nominee, with Vukmir's campaign in a recent tweet saying Baldwin would rather give "terrorists hugs and safe spaces than take adequate action to protect America and confirm Gina Haspel quickly."

But in the statement today, Baldwin said Haspel's refusal to call torture immoral at a recent Senate Intelligence Committee hearing "disqualifying."

"I believe torture is immoral, and I am deeply troubled this nominee would not say it is immoral at the Senate Intelligence Committee hearing," she said. "Like Senator McCain, I believe this refusal is disqualifying."

Haspel during her confirmation hearing last week pledged she wouldn't run an "interrogation program" at the CIA, but didn't call the agency's employment of it "immoral" when pressed by Dems, according to national media reports.

Johnson, meanwhile, touted Haspel's credentials in a statement following the vote.

"The world is a dangerous place, and, as the deputy director of the CIA and a career intelligence officer, Gina Haspel has the experience needed to help keep our country safe," he said. "I am pleased the Senate approved such a qualified candidate for the important role of CIA director."