

U.S. Sen. Johnson: Comments on Russia visa denial

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WASHINGTON — U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) announced today that he has been denied a visa by the government of the Russian Federation to enter Russia as part of a bipartisan congressional delegation. Senator Johnson is the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Subcommittee on Europe and Regional Security Cooperation and had planned to speak with a range of Russian government officials, American businesses, civil society organizations, and others.

“The path Vladimir Putin has chosen for Russia is a tragedy of historic proportions. Instead of holding free and fair elections, respecting the rule of law, and integrating Russia’s economy with Western democracies, Putin has invaded Georgia, attempted to illegally annex Crimea, conducted war in eastern Ukraine where thousands have died, and supported a barbaric regime in Syria that has used chemical weapons on its own people in a war that has resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands,” said Sen. Johnson.

“Eventually, a new generation of leaders will emerge in Russia. Working with Ambassador Huntsman, I had hoped direct dialogue with Russian parliamentarians could help set the stage for better future relations between our two nations. Unfortunately, Russian officials continue to play diplomatic games with this sincere effort and have denied me entrance to Russia. Regardless of this petty affront, I will continue to advocate a strong and resolute response to Russian aggression — and frank dialogue when possible.”

Senator Johnson has led and supported a number of pieces of legislation that aim to hold Russia accountable for its aggression in Ukraine and its targeting of dissidents. Last Congress, Senator Johnson was one of the lead sponsors of legislation to rename the street in front of the Russian Embassy in Washington after dissident Boris Nemtsov, who was assassinated in 2015. In the last Congress and in the current Congress, Senator Johnson has led Senate resolutions calling for a more robust response to Russia's aggression in the Kerch Strait in November 2018, as well as sanctions related to the Nord Stream 2 pipeline.