

‘UpFront’: Johnson calls for changes to asylum process to address migrant influx

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Just back from a trip to the southern U.S. border, Republican Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh, said the influx of migrants is “out of control” and the United States should turn back those without valid asylum claims.

Johnson visited the El Paso, Texas, sector last week. He discussed his findings and observations in an interview that aired Sunday on “UpFront,” produced in partnership with WisPolitics.com.

Johnson said well-organized human traffickers are moving migrants, mostly from Central America, into the United States. He said the traffickers are using U.S. border security personnel as part of their “process.”

“Customs and border protection have basically been turned into a mere speed bump in this path toward permanent residency,” Johnson said.

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Johnson said the migrants turn themselves in at the border, where they are detained for a while, and then turned over to churches or other non-governmental groups. He said it takes just a few days and the migrants are “in the interior of America, pretty much home free.”

“Nobody’s really keeping track of where all these people are going,” he said. “And it’s a growing crisis.”

Johnson said many of the migrants are joining family members who came here decades ago, and some already have jobs lined up.

He said an average of 700 people a day are coming in at El Paso alone, and so far this year, it's added up to hundreds of thousands of people coming in at points all along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Only 15 percent of the migrants have a valid asylum claim, Johnson said.

He said there needs to be a "consequence" to stop the flow, and it's a "fixable" problem.

"Let's have that initial (asylum) determination be far more accurate, make that determination much faster, but fair, and have it be final," Johnson said. "So, if you don't have a valid asylum claim, we have to remove you."

"When you start sending back people who have spent six to eight thousand dollars, almost a year's salary in Central America, back to Central America, people aren't going to risk it," he said.

"You'll see a dramatic drop off of this flow, which should be the achievable goal of our policy," Johnson said.

"UpFront" host Adrienne Pedersen also asked Johnson if it was still his intention to retire from the U.S. Senate after his term ends in 2022. Johnson had said his current term would be his last.

"My intention was second and final term. But I have said this was not the reality I thought I'd face. I really thought Scott Walker would be re-elected," Johnson said.

"Again, you never say never, but right now what I'm concentrating on is the next two years establishing a grass roots juggernaut" to elect conservatives, Johnson said. "2022 is a long (time) in the future."

Johnson also has been mentioned as a possible GOP gubernatorial candidate in 2022.

See more from the program:

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