

Johnson tests positive for COVID-19, but not experiencing symptoms

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U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh, doesn't believe the confirmation of Judge Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court will be delayed after he and two GOP Senate colleagues tested positive for COVID-19.

Speaking with reporters shortly after announcing he is not experiencing symptoms of the virus, Johnson indicated Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., believes the confirmation process will push forward.

"One thing we have done with COVID is we have pretty well perfected the distanced and web-based hearings, and they worked quite well," he said.

Johnson is not on the Judiciary Committee, the panel responsible for advancing Barrett's nomination to the full Senate for a vote. But GOP Sens. Mike Lee of Utah and Thom Tillis of North Carolina, who also recently announced positive tests for COVID-19, are.

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McConnell said today he will call a halt to Senate floor activity until Oct. 19. But he will permit committees, including Judiciary, to continue with their work.

Johnson had previously been in quarantine for 14 days after being exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID-19, but the senator tested negative. He returned to Washington, D.C., on Tuesday and was again exposed to someone who had the virus. He was tested yesterday on the way to a fundraising event in Mequon after hearing Lee tested positive.

Asked if he was told to quarantine until receiving the test's results as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control, Johnson said he had "no reason to do so."

"I'm not sick, I have no symptoms," he said. " I certainly didn't anticipate testing positive, so there was no reason to quarantine."

An invite for the event listed five GOP elected officials as speakers besides Johnson, along with Waukesha County Judge Brad Schimel, the former GOP attorney general, as the emcee.

State Rep. Jim Ott, R-Mequon, told WisPolitics.com he not within 40 feet of Johnson at the event but intended to quarantine out of an "exceptional abundance of caution."

"I don't think I'm at any risk at all," he said in a brief phone interview.

Ott said he intends to get tested twice in the upcoming week.

State Sen. Duey Stroebel, R-Saukville, said he left the event before Johnson arrived so he could watch his son's high school football game, while a spokesman for state Sen. Alberta Darling said the River Hills Republican ended up not attending the event.

U.S. Rep. Glenn Grothman, state Rep. Dan Knodl and Schimel didn't immediately respond to messages from WisPolitics.com.

Johnson said a physician told him he was likely exposed by chief of staff Tony Blando, who he spent a "fair amount of time in pretty close proximity" with on Sept. 14. He indicated this was the last weekend he planned to attend public events in order to mitigate the risk of exposure and missing Barrett's confirmation vote.

Spokesman Ben Voelkel said Johnson was not at a White House event for Barrett on her nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court. At least a half-dozen people who attended that event have tested positive for COVID.

Voelkel said most of Johnson's Washington staff have been working remotely, but the office will go all virtual for the immediate future.

See the event invite [here](#).