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U.S. Sen. Johnson: Statement on coronavirus legislation

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WASHINGTON — U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, issued the following statement ahead of the Senate considering coronavirus legislation:

“President Trump has shown decisive leadership by restricting travel, declaring a national emergency, and forging a public-private partnership on testing. As the country works together to get through the challenges caused by the coronavirus, Congress must be thoughtful in its efforts to support workers and their employers.

“To reduce the coronavirus’ spread, we don’t want sick people feeling economic pressure to go in to work. Small businesses are especially going to feel the burden of this pandemic, with a growing list of canceled events and business shutdowns. We don’t want to cause further economic harm by passing bad legislation.

“Although mandating that all employers must pay for sick leave might sound good, we need to consider the unintended consequences of this legislation. I fear that rather than offering a workable solution, the House bill will exacerbate the problem by forcing small businesses to pay wages they cannot afford and ‘helping’ them go further into debt.

“A better way to address the situation and support workers who may be out due to illness or quarantine is to use existing state unemployment funds to accomplish the objective: Temporarily change laws to allow for this use, waive waiting periods, and have the federal government plus up the payments to equal lost wages.

“I hope the Senate will approach this with a level head and pass a bill that does more good than harm – or, if it won’t, pass nothing at all. The president and states already have adequate authority and funding to address the current situation.”

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