

U.S. Sen. Johnson: Statement on 'Phase 3' Coronavirus bill

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) said the following regarding the phase three coronavirus bill, the Cares Act:

“We are enduring a national crisis that is no one’s fault. Across the board, elected and non-elected federal, state and local officials are making tough decisions and taking decisive action to limit the spread of the coronavirus. These decisions are being made with limited information, so the results will be far from perfect. We must accept the fact that there will be negative unintended consequences.

“The Cares Act is a prime example. Although far from perfect, the Cares Act does address many of the problems caused by the coronavirus.

“American workers who’ve lost their jobs because their employers had to shut down need financial support. Their employers who have been forced to cease operation or have seen their business drastically decline also need funds to remain viable — so that they can reopen and rehire their workforce once the medical crisis has subsided. Financial markets require liquidity to keep functioning. And funds must be provided to our health care system to take care of patients and develop and produce effective therapies and vaccines.

“It was essential that Congress provide this support, which is why I voted in favor of it. But the \$2 trillion price was pretty hard to swallow. During national emergencies, it is illegal for private sector actors to take advantage of consumers by price-gouging. Unfortunately, in Congress, price-gouging in legislative negotiations has become a standard operating procedure. In this case, “not letting a crisis go to waste” dramatically drove up the cost of the bill and provided funding for purposes not essential to address the current crisis.

“I was pleased to work with Senator Baldwin, Leader McConnell, Secretary

Mnuchin, and the Senate Finance Committee to correct a legislative anomaly that made Wisconsin ineligible to receive the increased Medicaid funding provided in the Phase 2 stimulus bill. Wisconsin's elected officials now have an opportunity, but must act quickly, to become eligible for additional funding to help treat coronavirus patients and combat this disease. I was also encouraged that Senate negotiators accepted the oversight structure that I developed with Senator Peters and Department of Justice Inspector General Horowitz. A spending bill this massive will require robust oversight and auditing authorities.

“With the Cares Act passed, we must remain united as a nation to limit the spread of coronavirus and to keep the elderly and vulnerable safe through effective social distancing strategies. With that goal in mind, we also must keep as much of our economy up and operating as possible. As our knowledge of this invisible enemy grows, we must make wise choices and show a great deal of courage in order to defeat it.”