

U.S. Sens. Johnson, Grassley: Seek information about unmasking of Americans

Posted on Wednesday, May 13, 2020

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senators Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, and Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, sent a letter to Attorney General William Barr and Acting Director of National Intelligence Richard Grenell late Tuesday seeking the names of Obama-era officials who were behind the unmasking of Americans.

“We wholeheartedly agree that transparency is needed now more than ever,” the senators write. **“One of the most significant unanswered questions about what occurred during the 2016 election is how many Americans were ‘unmasked,’ at whose request, and for what purpose.”**

Full text of the letter can be found below and a PDF can be viewed [here](#).

May 12, 2020

-

Ambassador Richard Grenell

Acting Director

Office of the Director of National Intelligence

The Honorable William P. Barr

Attorney General

U.S. Department of Justice

Dear Ambassador Grenell and Attorney General Barr:

Based on recent press reports, it is our understanding that you conducted a classification review and declassified information related to numerous requests to “unmask” the names of U.S. persons who appeared in certain intelligence reporting around the time of the 2016 election through January 2017.

We wholeheartedly agree that transparency is needed more now than ever. One of the most significant unanswered questions about what occurred during the 2016 election is how many Americans were “unmasked,” at whose request, and for what purpose.^[1] Your recent decision to declassify dozens of footnotes from the report of the Department of Justice’s Office of the Inspector General about the investigation of the Trump campaign;^[2] the declassification and disclosure of transcripts of related interviews by the House Intelligence Committee; and the disclosure of exculpatory information related to the prosecution of Lt. General Michael Flynn, paint a more and more troubling picture of the conduct that we have been investigating since 2017. However, we firmly believe that the best way to resolve these issues is to determine the truth, and to make clear to the American people what did and did not occur.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that you make available to us, as soon as possible, all information regarding the “unmasking” of U.S. persons requested by members of President Obama’s administration around the time of the 2016 election through January 2017.

Should you have any questions, please contact Joseph Folio of Chairman Johnson’s staff at (202) 224-4751 and Joshua Flynn-Brown of Chairman Grassley’s staff at (202) 224-4515. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Ron Johnson
Chairman
Senate Committee on
Homeland Security
and Governmental Affairs

Charles E. Grassley
Chairman
Senate Finance Committee