

# ‘UpFront’: Johnson, Baldwin differ on Trump nominating Supreme Court justice

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U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson told “UpFront” he thinks Republicans will confirm a Supreme Court justice before the election.

Host Adrienne Pedersen asked Johnson to comment on how in April 2016 — seven months before the election when President Obama nominated Merrick Garland — he told “UpFront, “Let the American people have a voice in terms of the direction of the Supreme Court. They’re going to decide the direction of the country, why not the Supreme Court?”

The Oshkosh Republican, who is now in favor of confirming President Trump’s nomination before the election, said Sunday: “It’s a completely different circumstance. Back in 2016 we had a Democrat President and a Senate controlled by Republicans so we needed the American people to basically break the tie,” Johnson said.

Johnson joined the show, produced in conjunction with WisPolitics.com, via Zoom because he was still in quarantine after one of his staff members tested positive for COVID-19. Johnson said he’s still not feeling any symptoms.

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Last week Trump would not commit to a peaceful transfer of power. Johnson responded saying there will be a peaceful transfer of power when the results are known, but he is concerned about the election.

“I am highly concerned, as is the president concerned, about what’s going to happen when we have a dramatic increase in mail-in ballots. Do we have proper

controls to make sure those ballots are valid and they are counted on time?" Johnson said.

Johnson said he wants to see the state Legislature come back and affirm the deadline to mail back absentee ballots and to allow clerks to begin processing them earlier. Currently, clerks can't open absentee ballots until the polls open on Election Day.

"I would also suggest we change the law so election officials can start opening and counting those ballots well before Election Day so that Wisconsin results are known by 9, 10, 11, 12 o'clock on Election Day so we're not part of the problem," Johnson said.

U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, who also joined "UpFront," said she hasn't given up hope that more Republicans will join Dems in trying to stop going forward on the nomination.

Baldwin, D-Madison, wants the next president to make the nomination and the next seated Senate to consider the nomination.

"Two of the Republicans in the U.S. Senate have stated they will not move forward with nomination before the election results are in, and they will let the next president make this nomination," Baldwin said. "We still need two others to stand up and dignify their constituents and the oath of office they took and do the same."

Baldwin described the Republicans trying to get a justice on the Supreme Court before the election as a "power grab."

"The power grab is not for the public good," she said. "The fact that the Supreme Court is scheduled to hear a case one week after the election on the future of the Affordable Care Act and could well overturn that act in its entirety. I believe health care and women's reproductive freedom are litmus tests that this president will have as he makes his nomination."

Pedersen asked Baldwin if she'd like Joe Biden to publish a list of potential Supreme Court justices.

"He believes in advise and consent," Baldwin said. "So before making his nomination he wants to get the advice of both Democrats and Republicans in the Senate and I respect that position."

As Wisconsin tops some national lists for surging coronavirus cases, Dr. John Raymond, president and CEO of the Medical College of Wisconsin, blamed several things.

He said some of the surge is being driven by students returning to college campuses and “perhaps an element of relaxed social distancing that always happens around” Labor Day.

Pedersen pointed out that Wisconsin is not the only state with colleges and universities and asked why we’re doing so poorly.

“In addition to return of students, I also believe that masks and lockdown fatigue are contributing to the problem, as well as persistent skepticism about the effectiveness of masks to mitigate the spread of COVID -19,” he said.

He noted a recent study from UW-Madison that Wisconsin doesn’t compare well to other states for voluntary mask wearing and social distancing.

“There may... again just be a high level of skepticism about the utility of wearing masks,” he said.

Raymond wouldn’t comment on the politics of Gov. Tony Evers’ extending the statewide mask mandate two months but instead looked at it from a public health perspective saying, “We know from other states and countries that mask mandates do increase the percentage of people who actually wear masks.”

See more from the show:

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