

Johnson on 'UpFront' says Afghanistan withdrawal 'incredibly botched'

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U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh, said the American withdrawal from Afghanistan has been “incredibly botched” and he is not “overly confident” that the United States will be able to get all of its citizens and allies out of the country by Tuesday’s deadline.

“The real problem here is this didn’t have to happen,” Johnson said in an interview aired Sunday on “UpFront,” produced in partnership with WisPolitics.com.

“This type of withdrawal was so incredibly incompetent, this was so incredibly botched, and now we’re in a terrible situation,” Johnson said. “We’re relying on the Taliban to help us successfully conclude this withdrawal. I don’t have a great deal of faith in it.”

Johnson last week visited Wisconsin’s Fort McCoy Army installation, which is housing Afghan refugees, and said he delivered a word of caution to commanders.

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He said he is concerned about the vetting and screening of refugees because “what we are hearing is different than what we are hearing from the (Biden) administration.”

“They need to be very watchful,” Johnson said. “This administration is just playing a numbers game, filling up airplanes and getting people out of there.

“The vast majority (of refugees) are coming here for the right reasons. The goal is to fully integrate, successfully integrate, the Afghanis that fought side by side, that

risked their lives, kept Americans safe and alive, that should be our overall goal," he said.

"What I'm cautioning is, we will destroy that mission of successful integration of those people from Afghanistan with one failure. If somebody slips through and commits an act of terror. Then that will paint everybody with a broad brush and I don't want to see that happen," Johnson said.

Also on the program, Dane County Clerk Scott McDonell said he would have "to see what the subpoena says" before he would turn over any voting equipment to Republican lawmakers investigating the November 2020 election.

"We're not going to turn over equipment that would compromise our certification or the security of our election," McDonell said. "That would violate federal standards and federal laws, but we'll have to see what a subpoena says."

McDonell said his office has been assisting the non-partisan Legislative Audit Bureau, which is also conducting an audit of the election.

He said the Republican investigations are "not an actual search for truth" but the "promotion of the Big Lie" that the election was somehow stolen from former President Donald Trump.

He also said the insinuations are hurtful to local clerks.

"It is demoralizing for clerks to have their integrity attacked more than anything else. As if we're in on changing the results. Nothing could be further from the truth. We take an oath to make sure that every vote is counted, and counted accurately. And I think that's what hurts more than anything else right now," McDonell said

In another segment, Milwaukee Common Council President Cavalier Johnson, who will take over from Mayor Tom Barrett, said his priorities would include public safety, cracking down on reckless driving and boosting Covid-19 vaccinations in the city.

Barrett has been tapped by President Biden to become the next ambassador to Luxembourg. Barrett's nomination requires Senate confirmation.

"I was just as surprised as anyone else," Johnson said about hearing the news of Barrett's appointment.

Johnson confirmed that he will run for mayor in the next election.

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