

U.S. Sen. Johnson: There is nothing partisan about congress' ability and responsibility to get information

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WASHINGTON — On Wednesday, U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), member of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, raised questions in a business meeting regarding the Biden administration stonewalling Congress on oversight requests for unredacted copies of Dr. Anthony Fauci's emails and documents relating to coordination between the CDC and teachers' unions in drafting federal school reopening guidance. To date, agencies have refused to comply with requests despite statutory obligation to do so.

Full remarks [here](#) and excerpts below.

"Mr. Chairman, I sent you a [letter](#), also signed by five senators, requesting that you utilize this committee's power to compel the agencies to follow the law. They *shall* supply the information. Now I just want to use one example - a [letter we sent to HHS Secretary Becerra](#) - requesting the unredacted emails from Anthony Fauci that were provided under a FOIA request to a number of different outside groups. We requested those same emails unredacted. By the way, congressional oversight is not subject to the redactions under FOIA - we should have received those completely unredacted. Proof of the fact that the redactions are not valid, I just have copies of one of the emails, this is an email from Peter Daszak dated April 18th and it's just thanking Anthony Fauci for basically covering for EcoHealth Alliance. You can see in what was produced to the committee, and in the FOIA request, we have a big old redaction there. It was redacted supposedly because it was related to an open law enforcement investigation. We basically got the same four thousand pages - the five senators - except on this one email. They failed to redact that, so now we know what's under the redaction. Let me just

quickly read you what supposedly was related to an open law enforcement investigation. It says, 'It's been a very hard few months as these conspiracy theorists have gradually become politicized and hardened in their stance, especially because the work we've been doing in collaboration with Chinese virologists who have given us incredible insight into the risks that these viruses represent so we can directly help protect our nation from bat-origin coronaviruses. We're fighting to keep the communications with our Chinese colleagues so we can better address future pandemics like COVID-19.'

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"I have no idea how that paragraph could be related to an open law enforcement investigation. I won't describe this any further other than to again make the point: this law that we're invoking, that tells agencies they *shall* turn over this information, this a hundred-year-old law. It's been modified two times, most recent time in 1994 signed by Bill Clinton. The Supreme Court has affirmed Congress' need to have information to write effective legislation. For too many years, and again, I was the brunt of it for six years as chairman of this committee, government agencies, regardless of administration, have thumbed their nose at congressional oversight. They just simply refuse to comply. So we end up being completely ineffective in an incredibly important constitutional duty and responsibility of Congress. Now, again, there is no reason - they have the emails. All they have to do is provide them to the five senators that requested them in an unredacted fashion. By the way, our other [oversight request is to the CDC](#) regarding any contact between the teachers' unions and CDC regarding their reopening of school guidance. Is that based on science or is that based on political pressure? I think the public has a right to know. So, again, as the Senate committee on oversight, if we sit back and do nothing, administrations in the future, regardless of whether they are Republicans or Democrat, whether Democrats are in the majority in the Senate or the Republicans are, administrations will continue to ignore his oversight request and we will not be able to fulfill our constitutional duty and responsibility to our constituents."

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"We are acting on behalf of the American public, and the American public's right to know what's happening in government, what's happening in these administration agencies. The American people have a right to know what Anthony Fauci might have been funding when it comes to gain-of-function. They have the right to know

to what extent the CDC was working with teachers' unions when they were producing their school reopening guidance. That issue is going to come up again now here in the fall. So I'm happy to work with you if you want to get on a phone call and let these agencies know, 'No this is a bipartisan request and if you don't comply, we're just going to start ratcheting up the pressure on a bipartisan basis.' That is the best way to reinstitute the power of Congress in terms of congressional oversight, which right now is very weak. I mean I certainly felt it during my six years of chairmanship. I think all of us, when we put in our oversight requests, I see Senator Ossoff is still here, chairman of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, you're witnessing it right now. You're experiencing right now, it's very difficult to get information. That has to end. The American people have a right to know these things, and it's our responsibility to stand up for their right to know. So again, I really would like to work with you. This is incredibly important, and there should be nothing partisan about this, even though the issues might be partisan, there is nothing partisan about Congress' ability and our responsibility to get this information and the American public's right to know.

"The administration just feels like they're completely immune from complying. Even though all the nominees all come in here and say, 'Yes we'll all comply with oversight and give you anything you need,' and then they never do. So this is a moment to take a stand and I think we need on a bipartisan basis to make that stand, or else, again, congressional oversight will continue to be a joke. You simply can't do anything, and that's not fair to the American public."