

Opportunity Wisconsin: [ICYMI] Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, U.S. Sen. Johnson calls for subjecting Medicare and Social Security to annual budget talks

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MILWAUKEE, Wis.—According to the [Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#), on Tuesday Senator Ron Johnson suggested that Social Security and Medicare should be put on the chopping block and subjected to the partisan whims of Congress and its annual budget negotiations.

Meghan Roh, Opportunity Wisconsin Program Director:

“Senator Johnson and his Republican colleagues want to turn Medicare and Social Security into a political football. Wisconsinites work their whole lives paying into Social Security and Medicare, but Senator Johnson wants to be able to take those guarantees away when they retire. Senator Johnson, who once called Social Security a ‘Ponzi Scheme,’ wants to be able to use these lifelines for so many as a bargaining chip that he and his Republican cronies will only fund in exchange for their priorities. We’ve seen time and again how Johnson and his allies use congressional negotiations to cut important programs’ funding or simply let them expire. Now, Senator Johnson wants to add Social Security and Medicare to that mix. It’s time for Senator Johnson to stand up for Wisconsin workers and families instead of standing on the side of the wealthy and well-connected.”

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: Ron Johnson calls for subjecting Medicare and Social Security to annual budget talks](#)

Republican U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson indicated Tuesday that Medicare and Social Security should be subjected to annual budget deliberations, a move that could upend guaranteed benefits relied upon by millions of Americans.

Johnson, who is running for a third term in November in a race that could shape the balance of power in the Senate, made his comments during an interview on the Regular Joe Show, hosted by Joe Giganti.

Federal spending is in two baskets — discretionary spending which comes in annual appropriations in areas like defense and public works and mandatory spending that is generally governed by statute and includes entitlement programs like Social Security and Medicare that provide guaranteed benefits.

During the interview, Johnson was asked about the PACT Act — aid to veterans who have been exposed to toxic burn pits — and a controversy over discretionary vs. mandatory spending.

In his answer, Johnson suggested that he seeks to turn everything in the federal budget into discretionary spending — including Social Security and Medicare — so that programs can be evaluated and fixed.

“Defense spending has always been discretionary,” Johnson said. “VA spending is discretionary. What’s mandatory are things like Social Security and Medicare. If you qualify for the entitlement you just get it no matter what the cost. And our problem in this country is that more than 70 percent of our federal budget, of our federal spending, is all mandatory spending. It’s on automatic pilot. It never ... you just don’t do proper oversight. You don’t get in there and fix the programs going bankrupt. It’s just on automatic pilot.

...
Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer criticized Johnson on the floor of the Senate on Wednesday.

“Just yesterday, the junior senator from Wisconsin argued that instead of strengthening Medicare and Social Security, we should put them on the chopping block. Hear that, citizens of Wisconsin, citizens of America? The junior senator from Wisconsin wants to put Medicare and Social Security on the chopping block.”

“He has argued that the benefits which millions of Americans rely on every day shouldn’t be guaranteed but should be subject to partisan infighting here in

Washington. He would like to revoke the guarantee of Medicare and Social Security and make them discretionary. Well, you know what happens when we make things discretionary around here? All too often they get cut or even eliminated.”