

U.S. Sen. Johnson: Joins Sen. Rubio, colleagues in bill to protect cadets, midshipmen from being punished for not receiving COVID-19 vaccine

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WASHINGTON — On Wednesday, U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) joined U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) and nine of their Republican colleagues in introducing the Defending Freedom of Conscience for Cadets and Midshipmen Act. The legislation would protect cadets and midshipmen at the U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA), U.S. Naval Academy, U.S. Military Academy, U.S. Coast Guard Academy, and U.S. Merchant Marine Academy from being punished for their choice to not receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

USAFA recently announced that unvaccinated seniors would not be commissioned. Cadets and midshipmen who do not commission could be forced to repay tuition, room, and board expenses for their time at the Academy.

The Defending Freedom of Conscience for Cadets and Midshipmen Act would:

- Clarify that cadets and midshipmen cannot be denied graduation for not being vaccinated against COVID-19;
- Prevent cadets and midshipmen from being dismissed from their service academy as a result of refusing to be vaccinated (i.e. for disciplinary reasons for refusing the order to be vaccinated); and
- Prevent any cadet who is not allowed to commission due to their COVID-19 vaccination status from being subject to repayment claims.

Sens. Johnson and Rubio were joined on the bill by Senators Roger Marshall (R-Kan.), Mike Crapo (R-Idaho), Jim Risch (R-Idaho), Mike Braun (R-Ind.), Kevin Cramer (R-N.D.), Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.), Rick Scott (R-Fla.) and Steve Daines (R-Mont.). U.S. Representative Doug Lamborn (R-Colo.) will introduce companion legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The full text of the bill can be found [here](#).