

U.S. Sen. Johnson: Sens. Johnson, Grassley call on FBI to explain interference in Hunter Biden investigation

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OSHKOSH – On Thursday, U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), ranking member of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, and Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), Ranking Member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, sent a letter to Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Deputy Assistant Director of Counterintelligence Bradley Benavides and FBI Intelligence Analyst in Charge of the Washington Field Office Intelligence Division Nikki Floris requesting their appearance for a transcribed interview to explain the FBI's interference in the senators' Hunter Biden investigation.

On August 6, 2020, Ms. Floris and Mr. Benavides provided Sens. Johnson and Grassley with an unnecessary briefing on behalf of the FBI and Intelligence Community on matters purportedly related to the senators' investigation into Hunter Biden. The briefing led to a leak that falsely labeled the investigation as advancing Russian disinformation.

The senators wrote, "FBI officials initiated a scheme to downplay derogatory information on Hunter Biden for the purpose of shutting down investigative activity relating to his potential criminal exposure by labeling it 'disinformation'" and "whistleblowers have also alleged that local FBI leadership instructed employees not to look at the Hunter Biden laptop immediately after the FBI had obtained it."

Sens. Johnson and Grassley have previously requested additional records related to the briefing, but have not received a sufficient response from FBI Director

Christopher Wray. “The FBI has consistently failed to respond in full to each request and failed to provide those critical records which casts further doubt on the true purpose for the briefing,” said the senators.

Read the senators’ September 2020 report [here](#) and November 2020 supplemental report [here](#).

Read more about the letter in Fox News and Washington Examiner.

The full text of the letter can be found [here](#) and below.

August 25, 2022

Ms. Nikki Floris

Intelligence Analyst in Charge

Intelligence Division, Washington Field Office

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Mr. Bradley Benavides

Deputy Assistant Director

Counterintelligence Division

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Dear Ms. Floris and Mr. Benavides:

On August 6, 2020, as we were finishing our September 23, 2020, report on Hunter Biden’s financial connections to foreign governments and questionable foreign nationals, you provided a briefing to us on behalf of the FBI and Intelligence Community.[1] As we have publicly and privately stated to you and Director Wray since that briefing, the briefing was unnecessary and was only done because of pressure from our Democratic colleagues, including Democratic Leadership, to falsely attack our Biden investigation as advancing Russian disinformation.[2]

For example, on July 13, 2020, then-Minority Leader Schumer, Senator Warner, Speaker Pelosi and Representative Schiff sent a letter, with a classified attachment, to the FBI to express a purported belief that Congress was the subject of a foreign disinformation campaign.[3] The classified attachment included unclassified elements that, among other things, attempted – and failed – to tie our investigation into the Biden family’s financial deals to foreign disinformation. Those elements were then leaked to the press.[4] As you are undoubtedly aware, we’ve successfully

refuted those false allegations and, most recently, we've made public a series of authentic bank records relating to the Biden family's connections to the communist Chinese government, which Democrats had previously tried - and failed - to claim advanced Russian disinformation.[5]

In addition, on July 16, 2020, then-Ranking Member Peters and then-Ranking Member Wyden wrote to us requesting a briefing from the FBI's Foreign Influence Task Force on matters purportedly relating to our investigation.[6] On July 28, 2020, we responded to them and reminded them that in March 2020, the FBI and relevant members of the Intelligence Community had already briefed our committees and provided assurances that there was no reason that our committees should not continue their investigation.[7] Nonetheless, the FBI succumbed to the Democratic pressure and provided the infamous August 6, 2020, briefing.

With respect to the substance of the briefing, it consisted primarily of information that we already knew and information unconnected to our Biden investigation. We made clear to you at the briefing that it was not relevant to the substance of our work. In response, you stated that the FBI is not attempting to "quash, curtail, or interfere" in the investigation in any way.[8] We also made clear our concern that the briefing would be subject to a leak that would shed a false light on the focus of our investigation. Indeed, on May 1, 2021, the Washington Post did exactly that and so did the other inaccurate media articles during the course of our investigation which falsely labeled our investigation as advancing Russian disinformation.[9] Moreover, whistleblowers have recently alleged that in August 2020, the same month you provided the briefing to us, FBI officials initiated a scheme to downplay derogatory information on Hunter Biden for the purpose of shutting down investigative activity relating to his potential criminal exposure by labeling it "disinformation." [10] Whistleblowers have also alleged that local FBI leadership instructed employees not to look at the Hunter Biden laptop immediately after the FBI had obtained it.[11]

At the briefing as well as after, we requested relevant records relating to what happened at the briefing, including the 302 or similar summary, the intelligence basis for the briefing and the personnel involved in making the decision to brief us. On August 12, 2020; May 3, 2021; July 25, 2022; and August 11, 2022, those requests were made.[12] The FBI has consistently failed to respond in full to each request and failed to provide those critical records which casts further doubt on the true purpose for the briefing.

Simply put, the unnecessary FBI briefing provided the Democrats and liberal media the vehicle to spread their false narrative that our work advanced Russian disinformation. Although you stated that the FBI didn't intend to "interfere" in our investigation, the practical effect of such an unnecessary briefing and the subsequent leaks relating to it created interference, which frustrated and obstructed congressional oversight efforts.

The FBI answers to Congress and the American people; therefore, we request that you appear before us for a transcribed interview on these and related matters no later than September 8, 2022. In addition, at the time of our initial request in August 2020, all records relating to the briefing should have been preserved.[13] This letter reiterates that request.

Sincerely,