

U.S. Sen. Johnson: Sens. Johnson, Rand Paul and colleagues stand with armed forces, demand Senate vote on ending military COVID-19 vaccine mandate

Posted on Wednesday, Nov 30, 2022

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WASHINGTON - On Wednesday, U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) joined 12 of his Republican colleagues in a letter to Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell, Senate Republican Whip John Thune, Senate Republican Conference Chairman John Barrasso, and Senate Republican Policy Committee Chairman Roy Blunt expressing opposition to moving forward with the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2023, unless the Senate votes on an amendment to prohibit discharges from the Armed Forces solely because of COVID-19 vaccination status. The amendment will also reinstate service members already discharged, with back pay.

“The Department of Defense COVID-19 vaccine mandate has ruined the livelihoods of men and women who have honorably served our country...While the Department of Defense certainly must make decisions that will bolster military readiness, the effects of the mandate are antithetical to readiness of our force, and the policy must be revoked,” **the Senators wrote.** “The United States simply cannot afford to discharge our brave men and women in uniform and lose the investments we have made into each and every one of them due to an inept bureaucratic policy...We respectfully request that the Senate vote to remedy a policy that adversely affects our service members and our national security.”

Sen. Johnson is joined on the letter by Dr. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) and Senators Rick Scott

(R-Fla.), Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), Mike Lee (R-Utah), Ted Cruz (R-Texas), Mike Braun (R-Ind.), Roger Marshall (R-Kan.), Tommy Tuberville (R-Ala.), Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), Steve Daines (R-Mont.), Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.) and Josh Hawley (R-Mo.).

Senators Johnson, Paul, Rick Scott, Graham, Cruz, Lee, and others who signed the letter will host a press conference today, Wednesday, Nov. 30, at 2:00PM ET at the Ohio Clock Corridor in the Capitol.

Background:

As of April 2022, approximately 3,400 troops have been discharged from the military for refusing to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

While training costs vary between each service, the Army, for example estimates it spends \$15,000 in recruiting costs to bring someone into the service and another \$50,000 to \$75,000 to prepare them to join their first unit, depending on their job.

The military also faces challenges with recruitment. Military recruitment is reportedly down 23% from annual targets. Therefore, due to costs and recruiting challenges, losing thousands of troops due to their vaccination status is a readiness issue that the DOD should take seriously.

You can read the full letter [here](#).